

ASSESSING PUBLIC PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS IN THE WATER AND SANITATION SECTOR IN THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

A MASTER DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

BY

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2018

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge my supervisor, Professor Ulrike Rivett, for her constant support, constructive criticisms and guidance.

Secondly, I would also like to acknowledge the Water Research Commission (WRC) and my parents and brothers for their financial support and encouraging prayers.

I would like to give special thanks to Deborah Ajumobi, Megan, Theo Kadir, Selina Mudavanhu, John Fadiran, Lynette Ndlovu, and Professor Kyobe who sacrificed their time to advise and encourage me. I would also like to appreciate other friends and colleagues for their academic input, and for pushing me when I was feeling discouraged and providing support during the write-up phase. I would further like to dedicate this thesis to my late grandmother and aunt both of who passed away last year.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the community members and municipal leaders in Ndlambe Local Municipality and Kou – Kamma Local Municipality for participating in this study.

ABSTRACT

Public participation is considered fundamental in the management of water and sanitation. In the view of the South African government public participation is pivotal to addressing service delivery challenges in the country. However, despite investment in various participatory mechanisms, there is some reluctance from rural citizens to engage with municipalities. According to the National Policy Framework for Public Participation (2007), public participation is meant to be an “open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision-making. It is further defined as a democratic process of engaging people, deciding, planning, and playing an active part in the development and operation of services that affect their lives” (DPLG, 2007:15). Thus, resistance by rural citizens to working collaboratively with the municipalities defeats the purpose of the public participation process.

Preliminary literature reveals a dearth of research into the cause of the lack of interest in the public participation process from citizens. Existing literature indicates that there is dissatisfaction in the way the public participation process is being conducted, and that more examination is needed. The paucity of research is what triggered the author’s decision to analyse the participatory mechanisms being used by municipalities in the water and sanitation sector of the Eastern Cape. The study was, therefore, an assessment of participatory mechanisms and takes into account the perspectives of rural citizens whose views are thus stakeholder views. The objective was to determine the possible reasons for the dissatisfaction with the process in order to identify the factors that could be taken into account to improve the public participation process in the Eastern Cape. The main research question was: What are the South African rural publics’ perceptions on whether the participatory mechanisms used in the water and sanitation sector achieve the intended goals of public participation?

The study assessed the participatory mechanisms used in the water and sanitation sector in the rural communities in South Africa. Two local municipalities in the province of Eastern Cape were used as a case study. Rural citizens’ perspectives on various participatory mechanisms were explored to establish if the mechanisms used are promoting the intended outcomes of public participation.

According to Beierle (1998), the social goals framework has six main outcomes expected from the public participation process, and these are summarized into six goals as follows:

- Goal one: educating and informing the public
- Goal two: incorporating public values, assumptions, and preferences into decision-making
- Goal three: improving the substantive quality of decisions
- Goal four : increasing trust in institutions
- Goal five: reducing conflict
- Goal six: achieving cost – effectiveness

The study focused on five types of participatory mechanisms as follows: focus group discussions; public comment mechanisms (public hearings/meetings), public notice mechanisms (loud hailer, newspaper, media); advisory groups (ward committee); and modern engagement platforms such as the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) system. In this regard, the purpose of the study was to determine which mechanisms were most preferred and perceived as being effective in achieving the intended goals of public participation and identify which mechanisms rural citizens consider most ideal to encourage participation in rural areas.

The study adopted a phenomenological perspective and used a mixed method approach for data collection. Focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, the Likert scale questionnaire, field notes and observation to collect data with a sample size of 181 participants. Thomas Beierle's Evaluation Framework Using Social Goals (1998) was used as a guideline to analyse the mechanisms. Beierle's Evaluation Framework (1998) provided a guideline for determining the extent to which citizens felt each mechanism was likely to achieve the six goals public participation should achieve. In addition, it assisted in identifying the level of participation and decision-making promoted by each type of mechanism in the rural context.

The main findings revealed that mechanisms, which did not offer self-representation, two –way communication and trust, and respect of community values made citizens feel disempowered and more likely to resist participation. Based on the rural citizens

perceptions the most effective mechanisms were those that increased their level of involvement in decision-making and those that promoted the six intended goals of public participation discussed by Beierle (1998). There was major emphasis on mechanisms that were viewed as promoting trust, empowerment, and access to information, conflict reduction and cost- effectiveness. The main conclusions drawn were that deliberative methods such as focus groups and public meetings were ideal for rural communities. An additional conclusion drawn was that in order to promote efficient participation, there is a need for careful consideration of the mechanisms used in each community and there is also a need to be sensitive to the power dynamics of that community as well as to understand each community in turn. It also became apparent that effective promotion of public participation was also premised on the capacity of the municipality concerned in each specific case.

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

Rural area

“**Any** area that is not classified as urban. Rural areas may comprise one or more of the following: tribal areas, commercial farms and informal settlements” (Lehohla, 2016).

District municipality:

“...municipality that has a municipal executive and legislative authority in an area that includes more than one municipality, and which is described in section 155(1) of the Constitution as a category C municipality” (Lehohla, 2016).

Free basic water:

“Amount of water determined by government that should be provided free to poor households to meet basic needs, currently set at 6 kℓ per month per household within 200 metres from each dwelling” (Lehohla, 2016).

Local municipality:

A municipality that shares a municipal executive and legislative authority in its area with a district municipality within whose area it falls described in section 155(1) of the Constitution as a category B municipality (Lehohla, 2016).

Municipality

An area of jurisdiction of the third sphere of government, after the national and provincial spheres (Lehohla, 2016).

Basic Sanitation Services:

“The provision of a basic sanitation facility which is environmentally sustainable, easily accessible to a household and a consumer, the sustainable operation and maintenance of the facility, including the safe removal of human waste, grey-water and wastewater from the premises where this is appropriate and necessary, and the communication and local monitoring of good sanitation, hygiene and related practices” (Department of Water and Sanitation, 2016:9)

Good governance:

Good governance is about “creating a well-functioning and accountable institutions – political, juridical and administrative that citizens regard as legitimate, through which they participate in decisions that affect their lives and which they are empowered” (De la Harpe & Ramsden, 1998: 6). It is also about creating good and strong partnerships. It entails the following core principles such are transparency, accountability, participation, effectiveness, efficiency, consistency and coherence (DPSA, 2014; Harpe, Rikken, and Roos, 2008).

Household:

Person or group of persons who lived/stayed together sharing resources for an average of four nights per week for the past four weeks (Lehohla, 2016).

Involve:

To involve the community means both transferring information on an issue and accepting feedback on the issues, and allowing the community to influence the substance of the decision. In short, it assumes some degree of power-sharing with the community (DPLG, 2007).

Consult:

To consult involves both the transmission of information, but also feedback from the community (usually stakeholder groups, ward committees or the public at large) or officials and councillors on the information (Cape Winelands District Municipality, 2014).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FULL NAME OF GOAL	SHORT CUT TERM
Goal one: Educating and informing the public	Inform and educate (Goal 1)
Goal two: Incorporate public values, assumptions, and preferences into decision-making	Public values (Goal 2)
Goal three: improve the substantive quality of decisions	Substantive quality (Goal 3)
Goal four: increase trust in institutions	Build trust (Goal 4)
Goal five : Reducing conflict	Reduce conflict (Goal 5)
Goal six: Achieving cost – effectiveness	Cost- effectiveness (Goal 6)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

South Africa is recognised as a country with well-established citizen rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The right to basic water supply and sanitation is a constitutional right enshrined in Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution of South Africa, 1996 Section 24 and 27(1) (b) (Republic of South Africa, 1996). This right is also protected through the Water Services Act no 108 of 1997, the National Water Act 36 of 1998, the Water Regulations 2001 and the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 1997; Local Government Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998; Tissington and Seri, 2011). The Water Act no 108 of 1997 provides a framework for the provision of water supply and sanitation services to households (Republic of South Africa, 1997). According to the White Paper on Household Basic Sanitation (2001) it is the responsibility of local government (the municipalities) to act as water service authorities and ensure access to water and sanitation services for everyone (DWAf, 2001).

While the legal framework of South Africa is progressive, the lived realities of the majority of black South Africans (Koelble and LiPuma, 2010) leave a lot to be desired. In 2015, the High Court identified population groups in low-income areas, a majority of whom were black, as having inadequate housing and toilet facilities (Western Cape High Court, 2011).

Within the last few decades South Africa has made great strides in the delivery of basic services (Lehohla, 2016:1). As shown in the “Community Survey 2016 about 89.8 % of households used piped water, 63.4 % used flushed toilets connected to either the public sewage or to the local septic system and that 63.9 % of households receive refuse removal services”(Lehohla, 2016: xiii). There has been vast progress since 1994 in addressing the service back log in the water and sanitation sector. By the end of 2010 the sanitation backlog had reduced from 52% in 1994 to 21%. This was evidence that South Africa had achieved the stated 2015 Millennium Development Goal of reducing to half the population with sanitation backlogs by 2008 (Department of Water Affairs South Africa, 2012:12).

The major backlogs identified were in the area of upgrades needed, and in operations and maintenance (Department of Water Affairs, 2012). About 3.2 million households were listed as being at risk of service delivery failure or experiencing service delivery breakdowns. In addition, 1.4 million households in informal settlements have no access to services and 64% of households (584 378 households) depend on interim services and are considered to be also at risk of service delivery breakdown (Department of Water Affairs South Africa, 2012: 16).

In South Africa, those residing in rural municipalities or poor communities tend to have less access to efficient service delivery (Lehohla, 2016; Naidoo, 2016). Despite improvements in access to water, since 2002, rural areas located in the Eastern Cape Province were described as still lagging behind with regard to clean water access (Naidoo, 2016). These areas are still to a certain extent dependent on groundwater for their drinking water (Naidoo, 2016). This is indicative of inequalities in service delivery, particularly for rural populations. Owing to poor living conditions and inequalities in service delivery, disadvantaged citizens have consistently engaged in service delivery protests since 2004 (Bond & Mottiar, 2013; SABC, 2016).

In order to address service delivery challenges the South African government committed itself to improving the quality of life for all citizens by incorporating policies and programmes that encourage citizen participation in all sectors of the economy, including the Water and Sanitation Sector (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The programmes were driven by policies embodied in the Reconstruction and Development programme of 1994, the Constitution of 1996 Section 59, the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service 1997, the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, the Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation 2005 and 2007, and the Guide on Public Participation in the Public Service 2014. Public participation is, therefore, considered a Constitutional Right for all South Africans as shown in the Constitution of 1996 Section 59. All the above policies, especially both the Public Participation Frameworks for 2005 and 2007, enforce that citizens should be involved in all levels of decision-making from planning to monitoring and implementation (DPLG, 2005; DPLG, 2007)

Public participation, which is at times termed citizen participation, was recognized as being central to promoting good governance hence, the change in approach (DPLG, 2007; DPSA, 2014). Good governance has to do with “encouraging transparency, accountability, building strong relations and partnerships” (DPSA, 2014:4). These policies and programmes were intended to foster a working partnership with citizens. The partnerships were intended to assist in overcoming developmental challenges, which in this case refer to unequal access to basic water and sanitation (DPSA, 2014:4). The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 requires local municipalities to ensure efficient water and sanitation services in a manner that allows for the participation of citizens (Republic of South Africa, 2000). This is achieved through the use of various mechanisms, particularly the ward committee, which acts as representative of the public and liaises with the municipality in all public decision- making from planning to implementation.

According to the South African Government, public participation improves communication and mitigates conflict pertaining to service delivery between municipalities and citizens by creating two-way communication platforms (Legislative Sector South Africa, 2013). This partnership is meant to be an empowering process which improves the efficiency of service delivery and promotes the accountability of municipal leaders as well as good governance as stipulated in the South African Constitution (DPLG, 2005; DPLG, 2007).

The government introduced a number of participatory mechanisms to assist public participation. The mechanisms included the African peer review, open government partnership, community development workers, imbizo and ward committees¹ (The DPSA, 2014). The government also made a provision for public meetings and the use of surveys, newsletters, posters, loudhailers, email notifications and media advertisements (DPLG, 2007). Furthermore, arrangements were put in place to handle community complaints and fine-tune the management systems. These various mechanisms are elaborated in Chapter Two under section 2.6 to provide understanding of the mechanisms.

Despite Government efforts to create public participation platforms, engagement with citizens has proven to be a complex process and has not always been as effective as it should be (Smith and Green, 2005; Smith, 2011). It is evident from the frequent protests, accusations of corruption, dissatisfaction with services and sanitation backlogs, that

¹ The term Imbizo is an African word that refers to a special meeting (DPLG, 2007) ,

major service delivery and engagement challenges still persist (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2009; Franceys and Gerlach, 2011).

Contrary to expectations, public participation has sometimes been described as a “tokenistic exercise that reasserts patrician control of local resources rather than opening the space for the different actors to debate how best to plan and distribute” (Smith, 2011: 505). Past studies by Buccus, Hemson, Hicks, and Piper (2007) express similar sentiments about the public participation process and observe that the process does not actually give the citizens power (Buccus et al., 2007). The lack of power over decisions has been one of the main reasons for rural citizens’ reluctance to engage with key stakeholders (Eversole, 2010). In addition, Alexander (2010:25), points out that citizens disapprove of their leaders and have gone on to describe them as uncaring, self-serving and corrupt. The poor relationship between the citizens and the leaders needs addressing in order to improve the participation process (Alexander, 2010). Smith (2011) is skeptical about the effectiveness of the mechanisms used in addressing citizen’s service delivery concerns.

In recognition of service delivery protests, citizen dissatisfaction and reluctance to engage, this research investigated the participatory mechanisms being used to engage with the public in the context of water and sanitation service delivery in rural areas. This was done with the aim of assessing participatory mechanisms in general in order to identify the most ideal method to encourage public participation by rural citizens and also factor in their perspectives.

This study is part of a larger study focused on incentivising community engagement in drinking water supply management, in order to improve service delivery

(Rivett, Taylor, Chair, Forlee, Mrwebi. van Belle and Chigona, 2013). Research was needed to identify the opportunities that could further incentivise the community to engage with municipalities and other stakeholders, thereby reducing resistance by the citizens. In part, this study was intended to investigate the participatory mechanisms used in South African municipalities in order to determine what the challenges were. This study was meant to contribute to the debate on how to encourage citizen participation in the civic affairs of rural areas.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study contributes to the understanding of public participation and the application of participatory mechanisms in the water and sanitation sector. It goes beyond defining public participation or emphasizing the value of public participation and explores the citizens' perceptions on whether the mechanisms used achieve the intended outcomes and goals of public participation. Mechanisms were identified that are more likely to improve participation within the context of rural communities in South Africa. This study is therefore significant, given how mechanisms and the perception of the public can change over time.

In terms of context, most studies that evaluate participatory processes or mechanisms have generally taken place in the global north as opposed to the global South (Wiedemann and Femers, 1993; Beierle, 1998; Skelcher and Torfing, 2010). This research offers a unique perspective on rural communities and has the potential to increase people's understanding of the contexts of development prevalent in countries in Southern Africa. The study contributes to literature on this subject and is useful since only a few African countries, such as Ghana and Uganda, are known to have formal public participation procedures (Public Service Commission, 2008).

In addition, no formally published public participation studies in South Africa were identified that offer an empirical assessment of the various mechanisms. Most authors have focused on the public participation process in different sectors or assessing participatory mechanisms individually (Houston, 2001; Bauer, 2009; Booysen, 2009; Paradza, Mokwena, and Richards, 2010; Mukonza, 2013; Brown, 2014).

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study responded to the following research question:

What are the South African rural public's perceptions on whether the participatory mechanisms used in the water and sanitation sector achieve the intended goals of public participation?

To answer the main question, further sub-questions had to be answered:

1. What participatory mechanisms have rural citizens engaged in that are within the legal frameworks for public participation in South Africa?
2. What are the perceptions of rural South African citizens on participatory mechanisms?

1.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section covers some of the ethical considerations of the research. Seeing as this study was categorized as a follow-up study, it fell under the ethical approval of the larger study conducted by Ulrike Rivett (See the ethics approval attached in Annexure D). Ethical considerations are essential to this research. One of the main concerns was the protection of participants, since they were divulging personal views. Confidentiality was paramount in order to protect the participants in the discussion of the findings. To protect the identity of participants and towns, the two Municipalities were referred to as Municipality A and Municipality B in the discussion sections. The towns were labelled according to the municipality (i.e. Town B1, Town A1). The anonymity of towns and municipalities was necessary, as most community members and ward councillors in rural areas can be identified through their position within the small populations.

Although the names of the participants were noted as well as basic demographics such as age, gender and educational level, their names will remain confidential. Confidentiality proved useful in making participants more comfortable to share and it protects them from harm (Vos, Strydom, Fouche, and Delport, 2005) particularly in the context of rural communities, where people know each other and might be identifiable by referencing status, position or even comments.

The participants came voluntarily and the objectives of the study were explained to them. Written consent (refer to Annexure A) was obtained from all participants prior to focus group interviews. The above ethical considerations adhere to the University of Cape Town EBE Faculty Ethics Research Committee had prescribed. The data analysis and findings acquired are a true representation of the data obtained.

1.5 CONCLUSION: ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is organized into five chapters, which are described below:

Chapter 1 covers the background to the research, including the aims, objectives and significance of the study.

Chapter 2 contains the relevant background and literature review of the research. It defines public participation, outlines the relevant literature, discusses existing challenges to public participation and elaborates on current mechanisms being used by the municipalities to promote participation as well as possible participatory mechanisms. It further discusses various authors' perceptions of these methods and introduces the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodological approach adopted in this study as well as the research methods that were used in collecting data. A discussion of the framework used is executed and the analysis process is presented.

Chapter 4 site description

Chapter 5 presents the data analysis, results and also provides a detailed discussion of the findings of the study.

Chapter 6 concludes the research. It discusses how the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 were answered and provides recommendations regarding future studies.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter One provided the background to the study, including the significance of the study and also outlined the content of the dissertation. This chapter is aimed at reviewing the relevant literature and highlighting how this literature informs the dissertation as a whole and also facilitates its possible contribution to the body of existing knowledge on the question of public participation in the water and sanitation sector.

The chapter contextualizes public participation by defining and stating its relevance based on various scholars under section 2.2. Then section 2.3 relates the definition of public participation in the context of South Africa. It is followed by section 2.4 that is a discussion of relevant policies and pieces of legislation while section 2.5 discusses participatory mechanisms as they are utilized in South Africa. Section 2.6 specifies the desired outcomes of public participation. Section 2.7 explores the challenges that are evident during the process of implementing public participation in South Africa. Section 2.8 defines public participation in context of water and sanitation sector. Section 2.9 covers the challenges in implementing public participation in the water and sanitation sector. Lastly, Section 2.10 provides a critical discussion of the various participatory mechanisms in the water and sanitation sector.

2.2 INTERNATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation is defined by a considerable number of scholars from different fields (Beierle and Cayford, 2002; Creighton, 2005; Burton, 2009; Glucker, Driessen, Kolhoff, and Runhaar, 2013; Arnstein, 2016; IAP2, n.d.). Researchers in the environmental sector such as Beierle and Cayford (2002:6) define public participation “as any of several ‘mechanisms’ intentionally instituted to involve the lay public or their representatives in administrative

decision making processes". The mechanisms are comprised of a variety of methods such as public meetings, advisory committees, citizen juries and focus groups (Beierle and Cayford, 2002: 6). In these encounters, citizens express their views while at the same time exchanging information on a variety of issues.

Creighton (2005:8) contends that public participation is a process by which the public concerns, needs and values are incorporated into governmental and corporate decision-making. According to Creighton (2005) the process is interactional in that it promotes two-way modes of communication and interaction. The overall aim in this case is to make decisions that are not only appropriate, but also accepted by the citizens for whom there is room to exercise the influence associated with them regarding the decisions that are made. Creighton (2005) asserts that the decision-making processes are not merely the passing of information to citizens, but are rather a prearranged process, where participants have some level of impact and influence over the decisions made (Creighton, 2005:8). In a similar vein, Hughes (1998) as cited in (Glucker et al., 2013:105) and (IAP2, 2016) states that public participation is a process that involves the affected public in decision-making and advocates for them to have influence over the decisions made. IAP2 (2016:105) argues that by providing participants with relevant information and including them in decisions, and communicating how their views contribute to the decisions lead to more sustainable solutions.

Authors such as IAIA (2006) as cited in (Glucker et al., 2013) only focus on involving the public in the public participation process with no regard to whether the public has actual influence over the decisions made. The IAIA (2006) defines public participation in the context of environmental assessments as the inclusion of members or groups either "positively or negatively affected or that are interested in the proposed project, programme, plan or policy subject to a decision making process" (Glucker, Driessen, Kolhof, & Runhaar, 2013:108). Conversely, authors such as Arnstein (1969:279) emphasise the need for citizens to have power to influence decisions, only then would the process be considered public participation. Arnstein defines public participation as "a means to empower formally marginalized individuals" (Arnstein, 2016:279). Her emphasis on power

redistribution stems from an understanding of participation as an expression of citizen power.

The definitions of public participation discussed above show that definitions of public participation have evolved over time and that no single definition or guideline can suffice. The divergent definitions of public participation notwithstanding, what emerges from these varied definitions is that public participation involves the acceptance of citizen contributions. Accordingly, there is therefore, a need to properly describe and assign citizen contributions. Significantly, while the definitions cited are useful insofar as they provide some understanding of public participation, neither the methods of mechanism selection nor the types and levels of participation are articulated. It is also not clear from the identified literature how the shortfalls impact upon the overall participation process.

2.3 DEFINITION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

In the context of South Africa, the existing National Policy Frameworks (DPLG, 2007:15) define public participation as “an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision-making”. This definition is echoed in the South African Legislation Sector on public participation (Legislative Sector South Africa, 2013:60). According to the South African Legislative Sector (2013) public participation is viewed as a two-way communication process by which Parliament and Provincial legislatures consult with interested or affected individuals, organisations and government entities before making decisions. Public participation is also referred to as “public involvement, community involvement or stakeholder involvement”. This process is meant to be all-inclusive. In a country as diverse as South Africa, it is a process which must include all races, marginalized groups such as women, children, people with disabilities and the youth. The process aims in this way to attain more acceptable decisions (Legislative Sector South Africa, 2013).

It is evident that the South African definition of public participation concurs to a certain extent with (Creighton, 2005); Hughes (1998) as cited in (Glucker et al., 2013) and (IAP2, n.d). In accordance with specification from authors, South African policy definitions view

public participation as a process focused on the participation of citizens in decision-making. In addition, South African policy definitions incorporate ideas around the redistribution of power by including the voice of the marginalized, which point is also made by Arnstein (2016).

The important difference to note between the definitions of South African policies and those of recognized authors is that in the view of the South African Government, public participation in South Africa is more than a process or mechanism to involve citizens. In addition, public participation is a constitutional right rooted in the country's democracy (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Accordingly, public participation is focused on improving accountability (Public Service Commission, 2008; Republic of South Africa, 1996). In fact, the involvement of citizens in service delivery issues is regarded as a critical intervention in a democratic society (Public Service Commission, 2008). According to the Public Commission (2008) public participation assists in establishing democracy and building social cohesion between the government and the citizens, particularly with regard to the provision of sustainable quality services. These objectives are achieved when citizens (the consumers of services) are given the opportunity to state their assessment of the service delivery provided by government (Public Service Commission, 2008). These sentiments are enshrined in the White Paper on Local Government of 1998 which is discussed in more detail in Section 2.4 on policies.

Authors such as Selebalo (2011) emphasise the importance of public participation in South Africa. According to Selebalo (2011:1) "public participation is imperative in facilitating Parliament's role of oversight within the Executive it allows citizens to put to practice their Constitutional right in holding government departments and parastatals accountable for their actions". It is therefore important that Parliamentary committees keep citizens informed of the outcomes of oversight visits, consider the public's concerns with regard to their constituencies and also hold civil servants accountable for any mismanagement or acts of corruption (Selebalo, 2011).

The Public Commission (2008) adds that it is imperative that the public participation process is conducted in a manner that recognizes the new elected government's commitment to adopting a people-centred approach. This approach contends that the "people's needs must be responded to, and that the public must be encouraged to participate in policy making" (Public Service Commission, 2008:2). As part of the Public Service integral planning, the public's voice should be heard in both evidence – based planning and policy-making. Therefore, it is essential that effective participatory mechanisms are in place to provide a platform for citizens to engage in the public participation process (Public Service Commission, 2008).

Based on conclusions drawn from an implementation strategy workshop held in South Africa in 2006 with representatives of each Legislature and team representatives, it was agreed that the facilitation of public participation is the main responsibility of members of Parliament, Provincial Legislatures and committees (Forum SA, 2009). Siphuma (2009) holds a divergent view according to which he states that although public participation is implemented at national and provincial levels in South Africa, it tends to mainly happen at local government levels with the purpose of promoting good governance and sustainable service delivery (Siphuma, 2009).

South African Government officials involved in the implementation workshop of the public participation framework held in 2009 were of the opinion that with regard to public participation, the public should be involved when legislatures make or amend laws and that this should include the budget process. The public were also to be included in prioritizing policy. This provision is stipulated in the Constitution of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996; Forum SA, 2009). The Public Commission (2008) concurs with Forum SA (2009) on this and adds that the objectives of public participation are to provide citizens with feedback on service delivery and service issues raised prior to the process, to ensure platforms for frequent engagement between political leaders and citizens and to consolidate post-izimbizo reports and maintenance of izimbizo protocol.

An additional point to note is that which says according to the report by Forum SA (2009) the main role of participatory mechanisms, such as committees, includes regular visits to communities as well as information-gathering. These committees are also expected to provide citizens with feedback, especially on matters previously raised and also provide action plans to address the issues. The committees are also tasked with including the public in the processes of selecting and deliberating on the most important matters. The committees are also expected to “facilitate interaction between the public and the legislative and departmental representatives”(Forum SA, 2009:5). This mechanism is discussed in greater detail in Section 2.5 on ward committees.

While the above definitions assist in understanding and explaining what is meant by public participation in South Africa and what it should achieve, there is, however, no mention of assessment measures to determine the extent to which current participatory mechanisms are being conducted in accordance with the stated principles of South African public participation.

2.4 POLICY PERTAINING TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

With regard to public participation in South Africa, a number of authors have chosen to focus on the policies and legislation that govern public participation. While South African policies reflect the South African’s government’s commitment to public participation, they fail to provide a measure to assessing the quality of participatory mechanisms. Emphasis has largely been on describing the transition of the policy to a democratic participatory regime and assessing the transformation it has brought to local governance and society as a whole (Houston, 2001; Booysen, 2009; Taylor, 2010; Motale, 2012).

According to past studies by Houston (2001) and Booysen (2009) the South African government’s commitment to participatory and direct democracy is evident through the numerous policies, consultative bodies and mechanisms put in place at all levels of the political structure. These include mechanisms and processes such as the “integrated

development planning process, petitions, public hearings, policy-making, discussion conferences, Green and White Paper processes and consultative forums” (Houston, 2001: 3). The Public Commission (2008) concurs with Houston (2001) and expands on the various mechanisms stipulated in policy as platforms for engagement in South Africa such as izimbizo, Exco-meets the people, public hearings, ward committees, community development workers, Citizen Satisfaction Surveys and Citizens’ Forums. In addition, there are various structures such as the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) and the National Anti-Corruption (SA).

More recent authors such as Stuurman (2009), and Vivier, Seabe, Wentzel and Sanchez (2015) also concur with Houston’s reflections on the SA government’s commitment to participation and democracy, but add their own insights. Stuurman (2009) analyses the ward committee, one of the mechanisms that are stipulated in the Government policy as a necessary structure for promoting good governance (Stuurman, 2009). Vivier et al (2015) offer a wide analysis of the various participatory mechanisms stipulated in policy such as television, newspapers, ward committee, public meetings, Exco meets the people and use of information technologies such as ICT’s and social media as alternative engagement platforms². Raga and Taylor (2005) also offer an assessment of ward committees in Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality.³

The policies discussed include legislation such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, the White Paper on Local Government, 1998, the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act no 32 of 2000, the Batho Pele initiative of 2002, and the Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation, 2005, the Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation, 2007 as well as the Local Government Turn Around framework. According to the World Bank report on South African accountability (2011) the aim of these policies was to increase accountability and transparency in order to build trust among the citizens. Vivier et al (2015) adds that the aim of the policies is to ensure that local government follows the

² The findings will be discussed in section 2.5

³ The findings of all the studies mentioned will be discussed under section 2.5

mandate to involve the public at all levels of government processes from planning, policy decisions and decision-making related to basic services issues.

Public participation in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

The South African Constitutional Act 108 of 1996 places an obligation on government to establish public participation structures and systems. As noted in a preceding section 152 public participation is a constitutional right for all. According to section 151(1) and Section 152, national, provincial and local municipalities are to respect these rights by encouraging the involvement of communities and community organisations in local government and in matters concerning local government (DPLG, 2007). In addition, the Constitution as seen in section 195 (e) stipulates that not only should the governing administration encourage participation, but it should do so in a manner that meets the needs of the citizens (DPLG, 2007). Tsatsire (2008:164) argues that public participation must be pursued, not only to comply with legislative prescriptions, but also to promote good corporate governance (Tsatsire, 2008). Public participation is, therefore, a critical element of governance and in particular of decision – making and service delivery.

The White Paper on Local Government, 1998

Subsequent to the crafting of the Constitution of South Africa 1996, the White Paper on Local Government was also written (Republic of South Africa, 1998). This document promotes public participation and stipulates four main objectives of community participation which are as follows:

- “To ensure accountability of political leaders and to ensure they work within their mandate. This is to be achieved through participation in voting
- To allow citizens (as individuals or interested groups) to have continuous input into local politics.
- To allow service consumers to have input on the way services are delivered.
- To afford organised civil society the opportunity to enter into partnerships and

contracts with local government in order to mobilise additional resources.”

According to the White Paper on Local Government (1998:33), there are four levels in which municipalities require active participation in order to fulfil the principles. Citizens are expected to participate “as voters, as citizens, as consumers and as organisers involved in the mobilisation of resources for development via businesses, non-governmental organisations and community-based institutions”.

The policy requires that municipalities develop mechanisms to ensure citizen participation in policy-making and in the monitoring and evaluation of decision-making and implementation (DPLG, 2007). The policy outlines a few approaches for use in attempting to achieve the public participation goals. The stipulates approaches included forums designated to formulate policies, structured stakeholder involvement in certain council committees, participatory budgeting initiatives and focus groups in participatory action research. Taylor (2011) adds that the White Paper on Local Governance (1998) describes a municipal councillor’s role as that of involving citizens and community groups in the design and delivery of municipal programmes. It is, therefore, important to ensure that the councillor actually provides for individual and community group participation in the decision- making.

The Minister of Public Service and Administration issued The Batho Pele (“People First”) white paper to complement the White Paper of 1998. The Batho Pele presented eight fundamental principles to assist in cultivating a “people first “culture and promoting customer service. The eight principles as stipulated in the White Paper 1998 are:

1. Consultation
2. Service Standards
3. Access
4. Courtesy
5. Information

-
6. Openness and transparency
 7. Redress
 8. Value for money

A look at each of the eight principles can help understand each principle in terms of its context and applicability.

The First Principle

Consultation, the first of the eight principles is aimed at ensuring citizens are consulted throughout the decision-making process through various mechanisms. They” should be consulted about the level and quality of public service”(Republic of South Africa, 1998: 35). According to the World Bank (2011) in context of South Africa mechanisms such as customer service surveys, interviews, group consultations, meetings with consumer representative bodies and community-based organisations can be used.

The Second Principle

The principle of service standards is directed at ensuring that citizens know what standard service to expect (Republic of South Africa, 1998). The World Bank (2011) contends that this principle is meant to promote a partnership relationship between the government and the users to determine citizen satisfaction with the services or products they receive from the department in South Africa.

The Third Principle

Access, the third principle, emphasises the need for citizens to have access to information and all services (Republic of South Africa, 1998). Access to information is seen as a means of empowering citizens in order to address past inequalities brought about by apartheid. This principle aims to improve the quality of services rendered and delivered and to also save the citizens unnecessary spending while searching for information (The World Bank, 2011).

The Fourth Principle

The principle of courtesy emphasizes the need for service providers to treat citizens with respect and to empathise with their concerns, and also offer honest and transparent communication (Republic of South Africa, 1998). The World Bank (2011) asserts that when fully observed courtesy can assist with building trust to facilitate the building of a healthy partnership relationship with citizens.

The Fifth Principle

Information a principle required that citizens be provided with accurate and detailed information on the services due to them.

The Sixth Principle

Openness and transparency combine to make the sixth principle. According to this principle, it is necessary for the public to be informed on how national, provincial and local government institutions operate and on resource utility and management (Republic of South Africa, 1998). This principle gives the public an opportunity to question the person responsible for a particular project and to analyse the use of resources, thereby increasing its power and enforcing accountability on the part of public servants and officials (The World Bank, 2011). The last two principles are redress and value for money.

The Seventh Principle

Redress focuses on the efficiency of government officials to hastily identify when services are not up to the promised standards. If the services are not up to standard the citizens must be offered an apology and a full explanation.

The Eighth Principle

Value for money implies that citizens should be helped to understand that at times the change the public needs is access to information rather than additional finances (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

According to The World Bank's (2011) assessment report of accountability in public services in South Africa, the principles cited in this section were intended to encourage increased transparency, accountability and citizen involvement in public service planning and operations. Although these principles are ideal, according to (Soma, 2004) corruption is been identified as being one of the main challenges to promoting good governance in South Africa.

The Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 and the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000

Policies such as the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 and the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 require that municipalities consult the citizens in addressing the needs of local communities (Republic of South Africa, 1998; Republic of South Africa, 2000). The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 establishes the introduction of ward committees to act as representatives of the citizens. The ward committee consists of ten members presided over by a ward councillor. The ward committees were intended to be the main means of communication between the municipality and its citizens (Republic of South Africa, 1998; Buccus, Hemson, Hicks, and Piper, 2008). The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 requires municipalities to work in partnership with their local members to establish "core mechanisms, principles, and processes which work towards the social and economic empowerment of local communities". These policies are meant to ensure that local municipalities are committed to empowering the poor and to ensuring that municipalities have platforms and control policies that incorporate the needs of the people (Republic of South Africa, 2000). According to Buccus et al (2008), the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 obliges municipalities to embrace a culture of municipal governance which recognizes formal representative structures and citizen participation. Local communities are to be provided opportunities to be involved in the different affairs of the municipality including integrated planning, budget, and the performance management.

After introducing participatory mechanisms in municipalities, Taylor (2010) discusses the policy provided for the setting up of ward committees and the confirmation of their

members. Ward committee members were tasked with guaranteeing the engagement of communities in municipal affairs, particularly with regard to the planning of services and efficiency of management (Republic of South Africa, 2000). It is evident that these policies can lead to structural and functional changes in designed to encourage public participation in municipalities. However, Buccus et al (2008) state that regardless of the fact that ward councillors and ward committees are to engage in decision-making, the legal policy states that the final decision-making power rests with the council alone. This means that all forms of participation by citizens or ward committees are mere forms of consultation in which the council can use the information gathered to deliberate on matters of concern. This is probably where most of the dissatisfaction of the citizens stems from; they resent their limited ability to ensure that their views influence the final decisions made. The issues pertaining to the power struggle over decision-making are further discussed in Section 2.7 which discusses the challenges of public participation.

Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation, 2005 and 2007

Additional documents governing the public participation process were formulated in 2005 and 2007. These documents provide a policy framework for public participation in South Africa. The framework contains all the above legislation related to public participation (DPLG, 2007). The Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation of 2005 illustrates the democratic government's commitment to participation, that is, to empowering and not just mere consultation or manipulation of citizens (DPLG, 2007).

The Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation, 2007 is a build-up from the 2005 public participation policy framework. These document defines what public participation is as presented in section 2.3 defining public participation in South Africa. In addition these documents provide various benefits of public participation these are presented in section 2.6 under intended outcomes of public participation. This framework also references Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation to show the different levels of participation the South African government recognizes. This ladder is discussed in section

2.7 of the literature review, to also project the different power levels in decision making projected by each level of participation.

The National Policy Framework for public participation 2007 describes the current approaches/mechanisms being used to promote participation. The recommended mechanisms in this framework are discussed in Section 2.5 under mechanisms. According to the Draft National Framework for Public Participation 2007, there are a number of principles that guide public participation, and these consist of the following:

- **Inclusivity**

This principle is about embracing all views and opinions in the process of community participation.

- **Diversity**

Diversity refers to the importance of recognizing and understanding the differences in a community in areas such as age, race, gender, religion, language, economic status, ethnicity and the implications associated with each. An example of diversity is the ensuring of participation by all the various groups in the community, especially women and disabled.

- **Building community capacity**

Capacity-building is about empowering the various role players by ensuring they have a clear understanding of the objectives of the participation. This helps participants to know how to conduct themselves so as to assist in achieving the intended objectives.

- **Transparency**

Transparency is about encouraging openness, sincerity and honesty amongst the role players participating.

- **Flexibility**

This concerns the ability to adjust to change for the benefit of the participation process and also refers to being flexible with regard to ties, language, approaches to public meeting and process. In this principle, adequate public involvement, realistic management of costs and a better ability to manage quality output are expected.

- **Accessibility**

This principle looks at accessibility in terms of mental and physical levels and refers to the need for citizens to be able to clearly understand the aims and objectives of the engagement process so that they can be empowered to make informed decisions. This principle is about making sure the citizens are knowledgeable enough to participate at a level in which they can actually contribute to the process, and that they have access to that level of involvement. An example of this principle would be the conducting of meetings in local languages.

- **Accountability**

This principle is about the need for participants to be involved in the participation process and taking responsibility for their actions and conduct as well as showing a willingness to engage. Also taking responsibility for their thought-out the process and commitment to abide by it.

- **Trust, commitment and respect**

Trust is considered pivotal to the public participation process. It is defined as “faith and confidence in the integrity, sincerity, honesty and ability of the process and those facilitating the process”(DPLG, 2007:22). If the participation process is carried out without adequate resources it will likely lead to distrust.

Integration

The principle of integration is about ensuring that “community participation processes are integrated into mainstream policies and services, such as IPD process, service planning” (DPLG, 2007:22)

Based on these studies and policies it is evident that the South African government has transitioned to incorporate public participation. However, on many occasions the institutions and experts are failing to adhere to the policy and principles on how public participation should be conducted (World Bank, 2011). A study by David et al (2009) makes a similar observation that although many advocate for public participation, very few adhere to the policy and when they do they often fail to put it into practice. According to the World Bank (2011) this is mainly because the public participation process takes long and the municipalities in South Africa are under pressure to deal with high service delivery challenges.

Whilst talking about policy frameworks is something that can be commended because it shows the progress the government has made, it should, nevertheless, be noted that policies often do not show the peoples' lived experiences based on the pieces of relevant legislation. In this light, this study offers an understanding of how public participation manifests in the lives of people in selected communities in South Africa. In addition, although these policies reveal the framework that guides how public participation should take place as well as what mechanisms are in place, it is evident that there is, yet no framework to measure or assess the efficiency of these participatory mechanisms.

2.5 PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS USED IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Speer (2012) asserts that participatory mechanisms in developing countries assist in promoting accountability, higher government responsiveness, citizen empowerment, democracy and better service delivery. In this regard there are a number of mechanisms that can be used in the public participation process depending on country and department. In South Africa the government makes use of mechanisms such as the Presidential izimbizo, Ministerial izimbizo, Exco-meets the people, citizen satisfaction surveys, ward committees, community development workers, Integrated Development Planning (IDP) forums, public hearings/meetings, media related initiatives such as radio and television programmes. The Public Service Commission of 2008, the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act of 2000 and the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998

emphasise the use of ward committees. The national public participation framework (2007) also mentions the use of surveys, newsletters, posters, loudhailers, community complaints and management systems, email notifications and media advertisements (DPLG, 2007). With regard to the implementation of mechanisms, the government has given local municipalities the freedom to decide which mechanisms in the recommended list are most suitable for their community (Public Service Commission, 2008). This section offers a description and evaluation of the various mechanisms proffered, but with focus on the mechanisms pertaining to this study.

The introduction of various platforms of engagement is important as shown by authors such as Creighton (2005) because providing platforms and programs to engage with the public often results in trust-formation and development of strong relationships, something which encourages commitment between all stakeholders. This process is what is known as consensus-building. It helps reduce disputes and political controversy and also enables citizens to become more accepting of government decisions (Creighton, 2005). Corroborative evidence for the efficacy of consensus-building is discernible outside South Africa in the sectors of politics, the environment and health where the value and need of ensuring the provision of participatory platforms for involving the public (Abelson et al., 2003; Cayton, 2004; Speer, 2012; Van Belle and Cupido, 2013) have been demonstrated.

PUBLIC MEETINGS/ HEARINGS

According to Czimmerman (2013), most literature describes public hearings as a form of public meeting. He defines public hearings in the context of the United States of America (USA). In Czimmerman's study public hearings are defined as "an open gathering of officials and citizens, in which citizens are permitted to offer comments, but officials are not obliged to act on them or typically, even to respond publicly" (Czimmerman, 2013:1). Most of the meetings in the USA are conducted by local or state governments, such as the US EPA. USA authors such as Rowe & Frewer (2000) support this definition of public hearings. In their study which is largely an evaluation of public participation methods they

describe public hearings as presentations regarding planning which are conducted by an agency and discussed in an open forum. In these forums citizens voice their opinions, which however, may not have any impact on the final decisions. Czimmerman (2013), adds that the main objective of public hearings in the USA is to provide citizens with the opportunity to share their opinions and concerns over decisions that need to be made by a legislature, agency or organization (Czimmerman, 2013). Both these definitions describe public hearings as a mechanism that allows citizens to express their views.

However, Czimmerman also indicates that this method does not guarantee that the citizen's views are taken cognisance of or that they have any influence over parliamentary decisions on the issues raised. Similarly, in South Africa public hearings are described as a means to "engage with the general public on a particular issue or specific segment of society which might be greatly affected by proposed legislation" (Legislative Sector South Africa, 2013). As with the USA these meetings are conducted by government officials, parliament and province legislatures (Legislative Sector South Africa, 2013; Public Service Commission, 2008). Parliament and The National Council of Provinces (NCOP) in South Africa are responsible for organizing the various public hearings with the aim of involving the general public in policy and service delivery issues (Public Service Commission, 2008). A report from the South African education sector shows that public hearings are viewed as a platform for communication between stakeholders⁴. The focus of this report is the public hearing on the right to basic education. The public hearing proved useful in identifying the key issues that needed to be tackled in order to ensure the right to basic education for all (South African Human Rights Commission, 2006). In addition, the Commission described public hearing as a forum which promotes public accountability as envisioned by the country's constitution (South African Human Rights Commission, 2006).

Some authors distinguish public meetings from public hearings. However, the difference is not that drastic (Public Commission, 2008; Siphuma, 2009). For that reason, in this study

public hearings are considered as a form of public meetings. Siphuma (2009) notes that public hearings are similar to public meetings, but according to him the difference is that public hearings are more formal and structured than public meetings. Contrary to the Public Commission (2008) report, Siphuma (2009) claims that public hearings are not the most used method except when land claims are being arbitrated. In fact, according to the national guide on public participation, public meetings are, for politicians, the most preferred and used method when communicating with the public on issues pertaining to policy and government initiatives (DPLG, 2007).

In the South African context, Siphuma (2009) describes public meetings as well-organized formal meetings where the “project manager, project team, development team or donor meets the public or specific stakeholders at a public space, such as a community hall”(Siphuma, 2009: 95). Public meetings vary in size, usually depending on venue space. The agenda of the meetings is not always known by the public prior the meeting (DPSA, 2014). The meetings allow inquiries to be made and answered and entail open discussions between the different parties. Public meetings are recognised as a method often used by municipalities and preferred by ward councillors (Siphuma, 2009). South Africa’s definition of public meetings agrees with that of the International Cooperation in the USA. They both agree that public meetings bring people together and permit the members involved to express their views on the issues tabled and also listen to a public speaker on suggested action plans. The EPA (2017) contends that public meetings provide a space for participants to share knowledge on specific topics, listen to and formalize solutions together with other stakeholders. Public meetings increase awareness on matters that arise or have arisen and need addressing. The meetings also create room for proposals to be tabled and debated (EPA, 2017). The processes at public meetings in the USA are similar to those at public hearings and at imbizo meetings (African term for special meeting) in South Africa. In all cases, the platforms bring awareness to citizens on topical issues (policies or other problems) and encourage interaction between the citizens and government officials as well as other stakeholders. Furthermore, the involvement of all interested parties with

the aim of sharing knowledge and finding solutions in a collaborative manner is guaranteed.

South Africa seems to have scope for public meetings/public hearings generally referred to as imbizo meetings. 'Imbizo' is a South African term for a "special meeting, usually presided over by someone in authority such as a traditional leader," for example (DPSA, 2014:25). The imbizo is the mechanism that is most frequently used by politicians to discuss or present issues pertaining to policy matters and government programmes. Imbizo meetings like public hearings provide a platform for public participation through which citizens are involved in the implementation of government initiatives. Citizens are also provided the opportunity to work in collaboration with senior government executives to identify challenges and contribute to solutions (DPLG, 2007; DPSA, 2014). Based on the descriptions of public meetings and public hearings in this section, it would seem that public meetings are more than just a presentation of matters by government officials. In fact, they are an unmediated interactive dialogue in which all matters are discussed, over and above policy.

Despite the many criticisms from some authors (Fiorino, 1990; Beierle, 1998; Baker, Addams, & Davis, 2005; Williamson & Scicchitano, 2015) public meetings/hearings remain the oldest and most dominant participatory mechanism particularly in the political, health and environment sector. This is particularly true in the South African context and is corroborated by the report of the Public Service Commission (2008) which states that public meetings/hearings are the dominant participatory mechanism with in all aspects of service delivery (Public Service Commission, 2008).

There are a number of benefits associated with the use of public meetings/ hearings internationally, and in South Africa. In South Africa these platforms have proven their worth in informing citizens of things such as council decisions, community rights and duties as well as municipal affairs. This mechanism has also been described as a tool citizens use to present their issues to councillors and officials (DPLG, 2007). In addition to saving time, public meetings also help to communicate to a large mass of people in one

setting. This is useful and convenient for municipal leaders compared to focus groups (DPSA, 2014). This may explain why public meetings/hearings are one of the most preferred mechanisms where government officials in South Africa are concerned. In his study of South Africa's public hearings Buccus (1996) found that public meetings/hearings were identified as being easily accessible for rural communities. A contributory factor appears to be that meetings are held at centres within the community, thereby minimizing the travel costs for citizens (Buccus, 1996).

The reasons for the popularity of public meetings in Australia are in a number of ways similar to what obtains in South Africa. Such similarities point to the effectiveness of the chosen models of public participation. In both cases the mechanisms promote active participation by the citizens, thereby increasing decision-making for the citizens. For this reason participatory mechanisms are considered the highest level of engagement (Queensland Government Department of Communities, 2009). Based on the EPA (2017) understanding of public meetings in the USA, it can be surmised that a number of advantages can be derived from use of this method and that these advantages are similarly in evidence in South Africa. This then creates a coinciding of views between the EPA and official South African views on public participation and the decision-making process. The views in question include the fact that public meetings provide space in which citizens can express their concerns, discuss issues and air their ideas. In these meetings, information is disseminated, decisions are collectively arrived at and the community through its citizens contributes to the formulation of alternative strategies. However, the assessment that public meetings can help build consensus for action on complex issues (EPA, 2017) is apparently not in evidence in South Africa, given that it receives no mention.

Baker et al (2005) study conducted a survey in the USA to obtain the views of the participants regarding the factors that lead to either the success or failure of public hearings. Subsequently, Baker et al (2005) argued that although public hearings and public meetings could be the most dominant method in use, that did not mean they were always the most effective mechanism. Critically, the study identified factors it classified as being

essential to the success of public hearings. This study found that public hearings often fail to achieve their intended goals and that this was mainly because no effective mechanisms for informing citizens about meetings were put in place. Neither were advance arrangements made to acquaint citizens with envisaged content ahead of meetings. Furthermore, there was poor planning and preparation by staff in terms of presentations to be made and poor leadership compounded the shortcomings. Other negative factors included a lack of trust in the officials and doubt that they would actually take the citizens' views into consideration. There were reports of meetings not being completed and evidence that the officials had no understanding of their role as facilitators. It was noted that in cases where public hearings were viewed as having been successful, this was due to adequate planning prior to the meetings, clear notification of the objectives of the meetings and frequent follow-ups by the leaders. In these instances steps were taken to inform the citizens of the final decisions made by the city's officials (Baker et al., 2005).

It is evident from this study that most of the discontentment with public meetings and/or hearings stems from the fact that citizens want to actually have influence over the outcomes, over and above the opportunity to state their concerns which in the end are not always factored into the final decision. This is a limitation of this particular mechanism as it does not guarantee citizens power over the decision implemented and leads to distrust of government officials.

There were other critiques of the USA public participation process including that by King, Felty and Susel (1998) who criticised public meetings/hearings for not truly giving citizens the power to influence the decisions made in public administration. Their study questioned how authentic public participation is in the public administration of the USA. This study concluded that public hearings /meetings were perceived as being ineffective as mechanisms and, in fact, the participants said that the mechanism of public meetings/hearings inhibited meaningful engagement. The experience of the participants was that public hearings/meetings were used to convince citizens to rubber-stamp decisions made ahead of the meetings/hearings. There was thus limited communication

with officials hardly ever really listening to the participants or according them time to ask questions (King, Feltey, O'Neill Susel, 1998).

Although public hearings often prove to be useful, there still are, as indicated by Beierle (1998) regarding public participation in the environmental sector in Washington DC, some challenges that need to be overcome. Beierle's study revealed that firstly the agencies held the hearings late in the process instead of involving the citizens from the very beginning as required in the policy. Secondly, the technical language used in the public meetings/hearings was too complex for the generality of the population given its low literacy levels (Beierle, 1998). Another challenge identified with regard to the public hearings of a deliberative conference held in the USA was that meetings were held at times that were inconvenient for working class people since they were held inside the week and during working hours (Rowe, Marsh, & Frewer, 2004). This therefore limits their participation and opposes the principles of public participation which advocate for all-inclusive participation.

THE WARD COMMITTEE

The South African national policy framework for public participation describes a ward committee as an advisory committee that comprises a ward councillor and no more than 10 people that are elected from the ward and serve voluntarily for a five-year term (DPLG, 2007). Ward committee members represent the various interest groups in the ward they are elected in, on issues affecting that ward. The DPSA (2014) report's definition of ward committees concurs with the one stipulated in the National Policy Framework of 2007. The report also describes the ward committee as a representative body elected by the citizens and tasked with the responsibility of making the citizens needs known to the authorities. Ababio (2007: 5), in contrast, describes the ward committee in South Africa as a "two way communication channel for both government and communities on matters relative to governance and delivery of basic services". He views ward committees as partners with government working together to encourage good governance (Ababio, 2007).

The ward committee has a number of responsibilities besides those previously mentioned in the Municipal System Act 32 of 2000 in its policy section and code of conduct. The SALGA

(2016) observes that the ward committee is expected to organize and attend meetings in the ward, submit the reports and plans discussed as well as all the issues pertaining to their ward. Furthermore, in South Africa a ward committee is expected to provide feedback on the services offered by the municipality and present solutions (SALGA, 2016). They are also meant to provide feedback to citizens on matters brought up by ward councillors and discussed or presented in meetings with government officials (Smith and De Visser, 2009). Mpumalanga Province, in South Africa, assessed the role of the ward committee in enhancing public participation and made recommendations similar to those made by the SALGA (2016) and Smith and De Visser (2009). Furthermore it was also agreed in Mpumalanga that the ward committee should act as “a bridge that facilitates proper communication between municipal councils and citizens they represent” (Raga and Taylor, 2005; Rooyen and Mokoena, 2013:2).

Ward committees are operational in South Africa, India, Tanzania, the United States of America and other countries not mentioned here. These countries, as did South Africa, adopted the ward committee as a mechanism for public participation (Constitution 74th Amendment Act 1992, 1992; The Local Government Act 1982, 1982). In all cases there is a common understanding of what ward committees are, and what their roles are.

Studies by (Cavill & Sohail, 2004; Shaidi, 2006; Tshabalala, 2007; Stuurman, 2009; Taylor, 2010; Paradza et al., 2010; Vivier, Wentzel, and Sanchez, 2015) identify the ward committee as a tool that is instrumental to the public participation process in South Africa. These authors also point out that there are still some challenges with regard to the functioning of ward committees. Conversely, they cite cases where the ward committee public participation mechanism has worked well.

The issue of politicising ward committees and ward councillors in South Africa is identified as a challenge that often undermines the purpose of ward committees (Oldfield, 2008; Piper and Deacon, 2008; Stuurman, 2009; Greenberg and Mathoho, 2010). In this regard, a study by Stuurman (2009) assessed whether ward committees promote participatory democracy. The conclusion made was that “ward committee systems are being

underutilized as a result of the effect of opposing political affiliates within the ward committee system". This was often seen to defeat the goal of collaborative decision-making in the ward committee and this tended to impact negatively on the efficiency of the committee in representing the citizens voice (Stuurman, 2009). Similarly in the Greenberg & Mathoho (2010) study, an investigation was carried out to determine the effectiveness of public participation in poor communities in the context of development. The study showed that political affiliations determined who served on the ward committee and that that in turn determined who was listened to in the community. Issues of nepotism were identified as factors that discouraged citizen participation in decision-making and that added to a lack of trust in the ward committee system.

In the South African context, ward committees are supposed to be a mechanism that enhances participatory democracy in local government and represent the voice of the people (DPLG and GTZ, 2005:25; Ntuli, 2011). In addition, ward committees are guided by terms of reference outlining the roles, rules and regulations to be adhered to (Ntuli, 2011). However, this is not always the case in reality (Cavill and Sohail, 2004; Himlin, 2005; Smith and De Visser, 2009; GGIN, 2012), as ward committees have proved to be ineffectual particularly in representing the poor. In Smith and De Visser (2009) the analysis of ward committees in six case studies reveals a number of problems affecting the efficiency of ward committee in South Africa. One of the main problems identified is the lack of skills in the case of ward committee members, despite the fact that they are meant to handle the queries and complaints raised by citizens. A skills audit of 373 ward committee members conducted in Nelson Mandela Bay revealed that only 34 members (9%) had educational qualification above matric whilst the majority (59 members constituting 16%) did not even have matric. Researches by Himlin (2005) and Smith and De Visser (2009) show that the ward committees are not clearly conversant with what their roles are, hence their failure to perform their duties adequately. In addition, Smith and De Visser (2009) describe ward committees as dysfunctional entities mainly because of the lack of clarity of roles and the poor communication by ward councillors due to poor relationship between the two. This breakdown in relations often affects the flow of necessary information to and fro the

citizens and governments (Smith and De Visser, 2009) Similarly in the Vivier et al (2015) study which focused on determining the most suitable platforms for improving government-citizen communication, ward committees were found to be insufficient channels for either providing information on Government services or fostering relationships between Government and citizens in South Africa.

The poor performance of ward committees in different sectors in South Africa is due to the lack of adequate knowledge on the roles, functions, and use of administrative equipment, limited capacity, absence of salaries, and the lack of efficient Government support (Cavill and Sohail, 2004; Stuurman, 2009; Smith and De Visser, 2009; Paradza et al., 2010). At times the ward committees incur expenses upon themselves. This is counterproductive, given the absence of remuneration and/or allowances. This situation has led to demoralization and contributed to high turnover levels (Cavill & Sohail, 2004; Paradza et al., 2010). Stuurman (2009) talks about the lack of Government support for these structures in the Makana Municipality and how Government is failing to equip ward committees with the necessary tools and resources and has, thereby, led to ward committees not being respected in the decision-making process. The government is also seen to have failed to attract the youth into ward committees. The few who have joined the committees have tended to adopt negative attributes such as the nepotism and corruption displayed by those in power (Stuurman, 2009).

In contrast to studies preceding theirs, Tshabalala (2007) and (Taylor, 2010) in their own studies based in South Africa, assert the usefulness of ward committees. The results of Tshabalala's (2007) study of ward committees in Emfuleni Local Municipality revealed that participants felt they knew their ward committee because the committee was known for giving door to door feedback and mobilizing people. Taylor (2010) reviewed ward committees in South Africa and concluded that this methods assists and enhances public participation. Ward committees were also recognised as being useful in consultations on issues pertaining to local government. They were also recognized as key tools to bridging the gap between local government and community members in the participation process (Taylor, 2010).

However, Tshabalala (2007) and Paradza et al (2010) also point out that at times the underperformance of ward committees is not predominantly their fault. Tshabalala (2007) argues that the performance of ward committees is highly dependent on the efficiency of the ward councillor who is responsible for issuing the agenda and conducting meetings since they are the chairpersons of the wards. If the chairperson is not committed to his/her work, the council will not acquire necessary information on the needs of the people in the community. Such a development can affect development (Tshabalala, 2007).

Paradza et al (2010) extensively discuss the evaluations of ward councillors and ward committees and also look at how they affect each other, their performance, the challenges they encounter and how all these things affect efficiency. Paradza et al (2010) point out that according to the Afro barometer rand 4 surveys of (2008) a key weakness of ward councillors nationally was their failure to effectively engage with community members. In this study about two thirds (72%) of the participants stated that they had not been contacted during the year while only 10% had been contacted once (Paradza et al, 2010). This points to poor communication channels between ward councillors and ward committees. Thus, it appears that there is little confidence in ward committees. According to a survey conducted by Paradza et al (2010) only 47% of the respondents had confidence that the ward committees had any impact over decisions. In some cases, ward councillors performed well while in other cases they did not. As a result of frustration with public representative bodies and the dysfunctionality of local government administration, community protests tended to break out. In addition, trust issues were highlighted. It was found that nearly 49% of locals had no trust in local government (Paradza et al., 2010).

FOCUS GROUPS

Although focus groups are identified as a participatory mechanism in the South African legal policy for public participation, there is no description offered (DPLG, 2007). Accordingly, there is a void in South African literature that analyses whether focus groups assist in achieving the intended goals of public participation.

Siphuma (2009) attempts to describe what focus groups are in the South African context. The paper presented by Siphuma (2009) was focused on assessing the role of public participation in IDP in the Thulamela Municipality. In this paper focus groups are described as “one on one meetings with the public or selected samples or groups of specific stakeholders, based on semi – structured interviews and open- ended questions” (Siphuma, 2009:83). Siphuma (2009) adds that focus groups are seen as a useful mechanism for involving the public in the consultative process of public participation. In this study focus groups were also viewed as an empowering mechanism for the citizens involved. This mechanism provides a space in which stakeholders can interact and share ideas, provide information on particular issues and learn from each other hence it is perceived as being empowering. According to the IAP2 (n.d) the consultative process in public participation refers to the obtaining of feedback on analyses, and from alternatives and decisions. By contrast, the empowering process refers to” leaving the final decision in the public hands” (Yee, 2010: 5).

A similar description of focus groups in the context of public participation is given by a number of other authorities (Abelson et al., 2001; Freeman, 2006; Washington Metropolitan, 2017; Yee, 2010). According to an assessment report of the public participation plan for the Washington Metropolitan, focus groups are” designed to provide a comfortable space for guided , thoughtful small group discussion on a specific topic”(Washington Metropolitan, 2017: iv). Abelson et al., (2001) corroborate the views of the Washington Metropolitan and consequently expand their understanding of focus groups in the health sector in Canada. In this paper focus groups are described as a once-off, face to face meeting in which a particular topic is discussed, the meetings involve 6 – 12 participants and are set up in an informal manner to encourage open discussion. The groups involved often have to fit a certain criteria in order to “broadly represent a particular segment of society”(Abelson et al., 2001:2). Abelson et al (2001) adds that when focus groups are facilitated well it builds a sense of consensus and feeling of growth among

participants. Freeman (2008) offers an assessment of focus groups and adds that focus groups encourages participation from those who usually feel they do not have much to say.

THE SURVEY

In Yee's (2010: 7) study focused on stakeholder participation in China and Australia, a survey is described as a tool used to "collect information, solicit opinions and build a profile of the groups and individuals involved." According to Yee (2010:7) surveys also act as a platform that provides the public with information and also bring about awareness and draw the public's attention to a particular issue. Conversely, in South Africa surveys are used in public participation to "inform the municipality of the needs of a local ward" (DPLG, 2007:49). They are also used to assess citizen satisfaction with the service delivery of whatever service provided by the municipality whether in water services or any other service. The surveys conducted are often referred to as citizen satisfaction surveys (Public Service Commission, 2008).

PUBLIC NOTICE MECHANISMS (pamphlets, newsletters/newspapers, loudhailer, media)

In Australia, the Queensland government recognised pamphlets, newsletters, leaflets, newspapers, and television as useful mechanisms for passing on information and raising community awareness on certain events or issues (Queensland Government Department of Communities, 2009). Similarly, in South Africa the public participation framework of 2007 recognizes public notice mechanisms as useful participatory mechanisms in the public participation process. Newsletters in South Africa are perceived as a means of informing citizens of community rights and creating awareness of a particular issue and also provide an updates on council decisions (DPLG, 2007). Similarly, in China and Australia, newsletters are means of keeping citizens informed and ensuring constant communication between the citizens and government officials.

Studies in Australia and South Africa revealed that providing frequent communication with valuable information from Government helps show Government's commitment to continuous engagement (Cavill and Sohail, 2004; Queensland Government Department of Communities, 2009). In the Southern African context the availability of information regarding urban services (water, housing etc.) at times increases trust and also deals with the issue of lack of information. However, at times the availability of information is seen by the users as substituting responsiveness (Cavill and Sohail, 2004). In the case study by Cavill and Sohail (2004) respondents were educated on available services through leaflets, television and newspapers. However, the challenge, particularly in deprived areas, was that residents did not use the information. Some of the residents claimed not to have seen the information at all; many were still not aware of what kind of services were offered (Cavill and Sohail, 2004). Even though newsletters/newspapers assist in informing citizens in SA they are only efficient in a literate society or in one with and good postal services. One main challenge in South Africa with such communication tools is that not everyone who wants to participate in public policies has access to newsletters/newspapers (Sebola, 2017).

For the informative mechanisms to work there needs to be a clear understanding between providers and users, around concepts and how accountability will take place. Australia's Queensland Government (2011) states that although informative mechanisms can be useful and less time-consuming as opposed to other mechanisms, they tend to promote the lowest level of engagement which is often not considered genuine participation. In addition, printed material (pamphlets, newsletters, leaflets and newspapers) can be quite costly to print and distribute frequently. Another disadvantage of printed material is that, not everyone will read it since it excludes those with low literacy levels and visual impairment (Queensland Government, 2011).

THE LOUDHAILER

A loudhailer is also referred to as a speaking –trumpet, a bullhorn or megaphone. Globally, it is described as a portable, hand-held, cone- shaped device used to amplify an individual's

voice towards an intended direction and distance (Teamluco, 2017). The loud hailer is often used for public events such as political events, sports events, rallies, auctions and crowd control or emergency. It is a tool used to address a large congregation in a large area or outdoors (Teamluco, 2017). There is not a lot of literature that analyses the use of loudhailers in the public participation process. According to a news article published by Creamer Media's Engineering News, Mackenzie-Hoy criticised the use of loudhailers to communicate to miners in the shooting incident of Marikana in South Africa (Mackenzie-Hoy, 2012). The loudhailers were described as not being the most suitable mechanism to use in the mine due to the low sound frequency which resulted in many miners not clearly hearing what was being negotiated by authorities and warnings. This shows that loud hailers are not suitable for every environment.

TECHNOLOGICAL MECHANISMS (ICT TOOLS/ MOBILE PHONES)

As evidenced by their additional assessment of participatory mechanisms, various authors recognize the increase in technology as a potential engagement tool, particularly the use of mobile phones in South Africa (Bagui, Sigwejo, and Bytheway, 2011; The World Bank, 2011; Mukonza, 2013; Sebola, 2017). There has been a noticeable increase in the use of information and communication (ICTs) in public participation not just in South Africa but also in Finland. According to Ertio (2013) research based in the city of Turku, the use of ICT's termed electronic or e-participation, can assist in tackling some of challenges that exist when traditional methods such as the accessibility of information for citizens cost efficiency of the process the need for facilitation. The advantage of using ICTs, especially mobile phones, is that people can log on anytime and anywhere which saves citizens from having to attend long meetings at set times. It is cost effective in terms of money and time. In addition, such modern tools attract a wider range of audiences such as the young generation and adults who may be under-represented in the traditional method. In another South African study that also assessed how ICT tools used to encourage meaningful

engagement, this mechanism was perceived as a better alternative than ward committee in promoting effective engagement (Vivier et al, 2015: 83).

Although technology has proved to be potentially useful in promoting public participation, Mukonza (2013) and Bagai et al. (2011) argue that accessibility to the internet or mobile technologies does not automatically mean increased public participation. Past in the case of South Africa citizens would rather use their phones for just participating in social networking. Mukonza's study aimed to answer whether mobile technology provided local governments in South Africa with a realistic opportunity of enhancing public participation through cell phone use (Mukonza, 2013). The findings of his study revealed that even though 78% had access to the internet, only 4% of the respondents used their phones to check Government notices or policies, and hardly ever engaged in public affairs. Only 7% of the urban population used mobile phones to engage with participatory processes (Mukonza, 2013). The Bagai et al. (2011) study assesses m-participation (mobile participation) in South Africa and Tanzania and also looks at a participant's willingness to engage E-Systems (electronic systems ICT's, apps, mobile, etc.). The findings from Bagai et al. (2011) reveal that although conditions seem favourable with adequate technology systems set up and willing citizens, the systems are still not being used (Bagai et al., 2011) the majority of citizens preferred to use traditional methods of engagement. One would have thought the use of technology would attract the younger population to participate seeing as they have the skills. However, in both these studies, ICTs neither aided in participant's willingness to engage nor assisted them in feeling heard despite their recognising it as a good idea.

Authors such as Vekatesh et al (2003) and Bangui et al. (2011) suggest that some of the reluctance to use technology may be due to a number of influencing factors such as the already pre-existing mistrust of government, the digital divide, the community's culture and other social structures, perceptions and attitude to ICT's, human capital (Eskill), and access. Vekatesh (et al., 2003) points out that the perceptions and attitudes often impact on the use of the ICT tool. The issue of perceptions and attitudes refers to the extent to which the individual believes the particular ICT's system will limit their ability to

communicate their needs. Human capital (E skills) refers to one's ability to use or make ICT's within the context of their environment be it in business, government level or civil society. Whilst culture and social structures refer to designed apps or ICT tools considered the language of the community and the citizens' values and norms for relating to self and others or those in authority. Mostert (2003) and Hofstede (1991) recognize the impact culture and community values have on performance as well as on views on mechanisms and not just ICT participatory mechanisms. Hofstede (1991) further discusses how certain mechanisms might better suit certain communities whilst in others disturb the harmony.

As for South Africa, although there is a growing need to also consider the use of social media (i.e. Facebook, twitter) as a platform to engage with citizens, the platform cannot replace traditional methods. Literacy levels are still a challenge in South Africa and while the youth may find it easy to understand the language used on these platforms and how to use them with facility, the older generation will struggle. This would lead to exclusion from participation which opposes the purpose of public participation.

DELIBERATIVE MECHANISMS

Despite criticism, deliberative methods such as citizen juries, focus groups and any other deliberative approaches are the most preferred in the UK and Canada (Abelson et al., 2003; Cayton, 2004). According to Cayton (2004) the public in UK prefer these methods over methods such as surveys or voting because they involve substantial information exchange, debate and discussion as well as shared decision-making. It was concluded that there is preference and demand for mechanisms that promote two-way communication between decision makers and the public (Abelson et al, 2003). Debate around deliberative methods shows that they make a major difference to increasing public participation (Abelson et al, 2003). There is an absence of literature that either confirms or disputes whether citizens today still feel that deliberative methods are the most ideal in the water and sanitation sector. Authors in the health sector mention the usefulness of deliberative participation in that particular sector (Blacksher, 2013). Although there is not much empirical evidence to indicate whether citizens in South Africa prefer deliberative mechanisms in the water and

sanitation sector, the public participation policy shows that they do incorporate such mechanisms which suggest that they see value in deliberative methods (DPLG, 2007). Similarly, Sebalo (2017) and Cutlip (2012) whose studies focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the use of communication tools by South Africa's Legislature for public participation in policy processes, indicate that although mechanisms such as telephones, emails and letters are useful, they are considered low levels of participation. In this context, two-way communication methods which encourage discussions such as citizen juries, focus groups and planning meetings are considered higher levels of participation. This is because these deliberative methods promote discussions between policy makers and the public, a situation which provides citizens the opportunity to contribute and influence the decision (Cutlip, 2012; Sebala, 2017). Sebalo (2017) concludes that the success of the public participation process is not determined by the communication tool applied, but rather how effectively that mechanism is used.

2.6 INTENDED OUTCOMES/GOALS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The outcomes of the public participation process were clearly outlined in the policy section and in the definitions of public participation from Creighton (2005), Arnstein (1969) and the IAP2 (2016). Globally, public participation is meant to be an empowering process where citizens feel heard and have power to influence decisions. The public participation process in South Africa as pointed out in the Batho Pele Principles and White Paper (1998) is meant to build trust, increase accountability, increase access to information, and educate citizens on how to participate in service delivery matters.

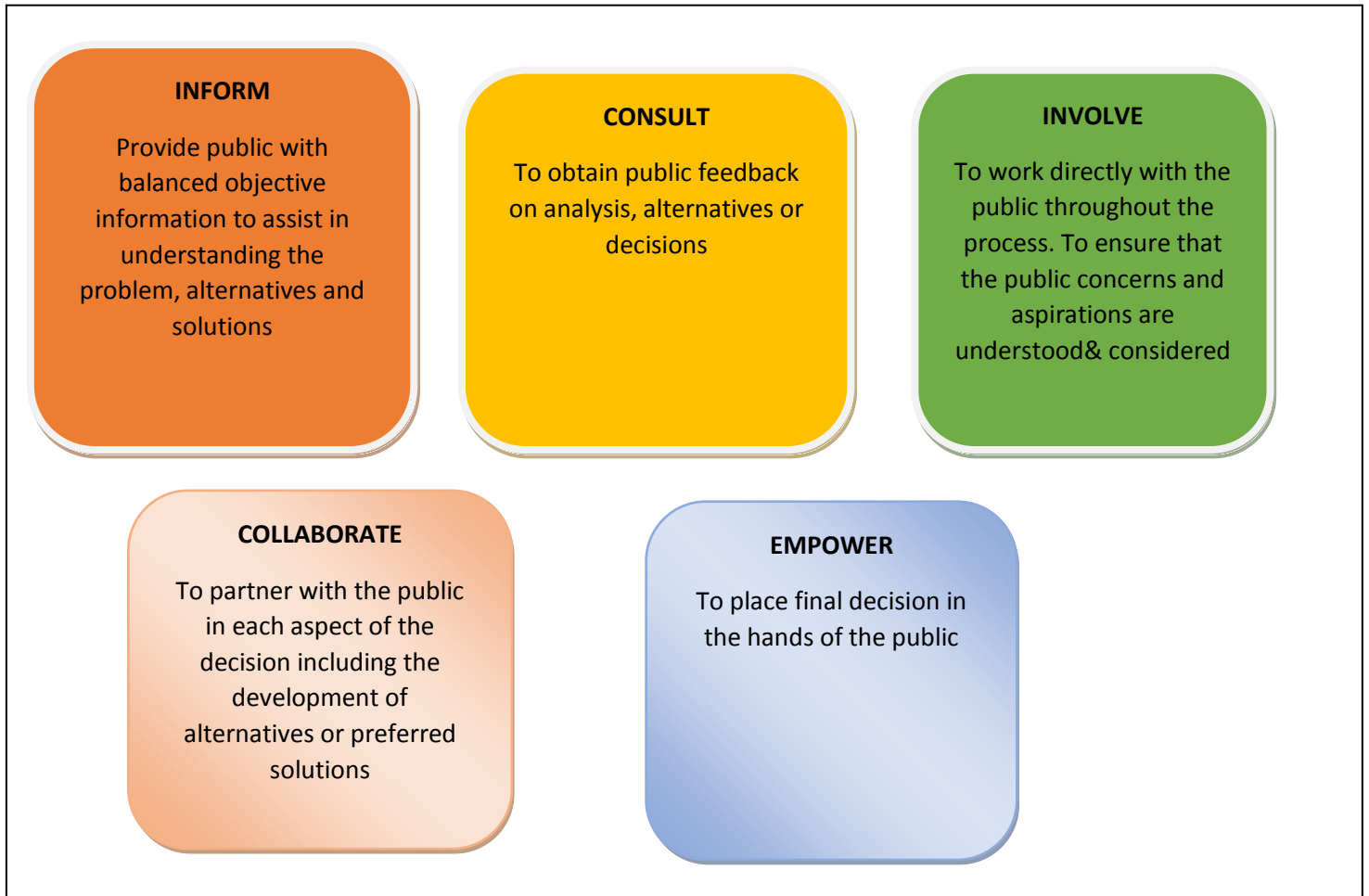
The idea is ultimately to encourage transparency in government programmes. The envisaged objective of public participation is to empower citizens by facilitating active citizen engagement in deliberations with each relevant municipality, in order thereby to reach consensus with the municipalities on specific decisions with a view to reducing conflict (Republic of South Africa, 1996; Republic of South Africa, 1998; DPLG, 2007). In terms of municipal governance, the gaining of consensus on how to address problems in collaboration with citizens is essential to promoting sustainable solutions and strengthening existing relationships with citizens (IAP2, 2004; Public Service Commission,

2008; Girma, 2014). Similarly, in the USA public participation in policy is meant to consider the public's preferences in decision- making, improve decisions by incorporating local knowledge, and bring justice and agreement in decisions (Innes & Booher, 2004).

Supporting documents such as the National Policy Framework for public participation 2007 (DPLG, 2007), state that public participation is meant to lead to the following:

- Increased level of information in community
- Better identification of community needs
- Improved service delivery
- Community empowerment
- Greater accountability
- Better wealth distribution
- Greater community solidarity
- Greater tolerance of diversity

In addition, according to DPSA (2014:36) the goals of public participation in South Africa is to inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower as presented below:



2.7 CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In a discussion on public participation, the Public Commission (2008) asserts that public participation is indeed essential to the progression of service delivery in South Africa. However, the implementation process has encountered challenges such as inadequate human resources, including poor leadership in some cases, budgetary and time constraints, poor communication and lack of trust in Government.

INADEQUATE HUMAN RESOURCES

Effective public participation requires skilled personnel with an understanding of the community being engaged with and its dynamics. The process also dictates the employment of an individual who is well versed in conflict management and who has a clear understanding of what public participation is (Public Service Commission, 2008). While these observations are a reference to South Africa, Creighton (2005) nevertheless concurs with the view of the Public Service Commission and adds that public participation requires effort and resources (such as adequate numbers of trained staff, time and energy), things that South African agencies do not always have, being under pressure to make top-down decisions.

Not all local municipalities in South Africa have the capacity to function adequately. Such is the case with the Ndlambe and Kou- Kamma local municipalities (Act, 2012; Ndlambe Municipality, 2015). The two municipalities are understaffed and have budgetary constraints. Reports suggest that in some local municipalities in South Africa there is weak political leadership, a lack of oversight and accountability, a lack of professionalism as well as a prevalence of poor staff attitudes and values. The municipalities also show a number of technical skill gaps and a general lack of competency (Brand SouthAfrica.com, 2016). A study conducted by the Public Service Commission (2008) assessing public participation, revealed that municipal staff had training in diverse backgrounds but not in public participation. There is evidence that ward committee members in South Africa, for example, essential as they are to the public participation sometimes exhibit a lack of the kind of efficient training that would enable them to fulfil their duties. This deficit of skills and training thus affects the efficiency of the public participation process.

Issues around administrative competency have arisen over time (DPSA, 2014; Koelble and LiPuma, 2010). According to the Koelble and LiPuma (2010) study which looked at institutional obstacles in service delivery in South Africa, municipal officials lack managerial and other necessary skills. In this study, municipal officials and councillors were described as severely lacking in experience in the field of municipal provision,

especially in rural municipalities. Councillors in South Africa were seen to be struggling to from the demands of local government and did not have adequate resources and support (DPLG, 2007). The DPSA (2014) also echoed concerns around the lack of support from top management departments and the lack of public participation training among staff.

The insufficiency in the numbers of skilled human resources is a problem other countries face from time to time. A clear example of this, is seen in an assessment of public participation in planning on Malta Island. Government officials in Malta were also described by citizens as showing a lack of professional ethics and expertise in public hearings (Conrad, Cassar, Christie, and Fazey, 2011). In these meetings there was a lack of order, with no one listening to other persons. The result of all this was that the immaturity of the leaders deflated the trust of citizens. The local municipalities in Malta were described as being not only limited in terms of finances and staff quotas, but also in terms of the absence of good leadership (Conrad et al., 2011).

BUDGETARY AND TIME CONSTRAINTS

The assessment of public participation practices in public service conducted in 2008/9 by the Public Commission (2008:27) showed that some municipalities in South Africa were facing budget constraints. The findings of the assessment showed that due to financial constraints, not every department had a budget for public participation and that only 62 % of departments had a budget while 38% of department had none (Public Service Commission, 2008:27). The lack of efficient funds explains why many municipalities have not been able to send their ward committee members for the accredited national training programme for ward committees (Stuurman, 2009). The DPSA (2014) identifies finances as another limitation to obtaining the necessary resources needed for public participation.

Studies by Wang and Bryer (2013) in Florida indicate that public participation is a costly process not just in terms of finances but also with regard to time and the personal skill required (Wang and Bryer, 2013). Creighton (2005) concurs with the Wang and Bryers (2013) findings singling out finances as a critical success factor where public participation is concerned. Creighton (2005) produced a public participation handbook in which he

states that public participation is a process that needs time and skill to implement. Creighton (2005) asserts that public participation is a continuum and is, therefore, not a rushed process. It requires effort and resources such as an adequate number of trained staff, time and energy. These are resources that are not always easily available to agencies and which then tend to exert pressure for top-down decisions. According to the Public Service Commission's assessment, the time factor in the public participation process of South Africa was actually one of the main reasons for the lack of commitment of government officials (Public Service Commission, 2008). The problems related to inadequate financing, time and staff have been prevalent over the years, particularly in smaller, local municipalities (3SMedia, 2013; Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2009; Mescht and Jaarsveld, 2012).

Lukensmeyer and Toreess (2006) whose focus was on public participation in Washington, assert that regardless of the goal of participation, whether through consultation or by empowerment, there are two main costs that are incurred, namely, production and implementation costs, and citizen participation costs. Whereas Wang and Bryer (2012) agree on the costliness of citizen participation, they nevertheless, still contend that production costs can be reduced depending on the participatory mechanisms chosen. It is, therefore, necessary to compare the difference in the costs of the mechanisms used, given that some are more cost effective than others. According to the findings presented in the study by Wang and Bryer (2012), low participation costs for citizens can increase the chances of quality participation through increased numbers of participants. This means higher production costs for administration and is a challenge when the constraints the local municipalities are currently facing are considered. Globally, financial constraints as well as time constraints have, in some cases, been the reason citizens have resisted participating as shown in the Ipat (2015) report on public participation and community participation in various countries, including South Africa. This report expressed the view that citizens tend to be reluctant to engage because they feel that the participatory process takes time to reach a decision and that participatory mechanisms incur costs (Ipat, 2015). The report did not elaborate on the type of costs involved but it can be concluded that referring to costs

such as those incurred when travelling to meetings, time taken when they could be working or making calls. It is, thus, evident from the literature that despite public participation having useful benefits in promoting democracy and better decision- making, the process can be taxing with regard to time and resources.

POOR COMMUNICATION / LACK OF FEEDBACK-REPORT ON ISSUES RAISED.

The lack of sufficient information and feedback is identified among the main frustrations of citizens with regard to public participation (Public Service Commission, 2008; Greenberg and Mathoho, 2010; United Nations, 2010; Sebola, 2017). According to Greenberg and Mathoho's (2010) assessment of public participation in South Africa, the lack of access to information in areas already conflicted with poverty and inequality tends to increase the citizens' distrust in political parties and institutions. This leads to citizens being reluctant to participate. For public participation to be impactful there is a need for a continuous two – way communication flow between citizens and government officials (Sebola, 2017). However, as observed by Sebola (2017) this is not always happening. Sebola (2017) also observes that South African citizens tend to complain about the lack of access to information. Some Local municipalities in South Africa are recorded as having poor communication and accountability relationships with communities. This is proof that municipalities face many challenges in the course of trying to improve service delivery (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2009).

The UN (2010) report also indicated that European citizens who are committed to participating were feeling unsatisfied with the fact they do not receive an explanation as to why their views were not considered in the final decision. International corporations such as EPA in the USA have also indicated that citizens are frustrated by the lack of transparency with regard to information and the criteria for decision-making (EPA, 2017). According to the EPA (2017) report the public feels excluded from the decision-making process and are not being provided with sufficient information particularly as to how these decisions were made and how they will impact the citizens.

LANGUAGE/ CULTURAL BARRIERS

According to Vekatesh (2003) and Bagui et al (2011) factors such as culture (beliefs, language, values) can affect one's willingness to engage. The DPSA (2014) also echoes these same sentiments. In some cases the limited English proficiency of the citizens can prohibit participation, hence the material used or meetings conducted must be made to accommodate the language differences of citizens.

LACK OF TRUST BETWEEN CITIZENS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Building trust between the citizens and government officials is one of the key purposes of public participation and can lead to consensus in the decisions and limits the need for coercion. It is essential that government authorities trust the citizens and the citizens trust government in order to facilitate the creation of a better partnership in which individuals feel respected and encouraged to participate (Ipat, 2015). However, according to some assessments, the issue of trust is still a challenge (Baker et al., 2005; Public Service Commission, 2008; Paradza et al., 2010; Ipat, 2015).

According the Public Commission (2008) assessment report, there are issues of mistrust between the communities and the South African government. This is due to previous experiences where there was a lack of transparency and accountability from government in terms of what is actually being done to improve service delivery, how funds were being used and how decisions were being made in the public participation process. As previously mentioned in the discussion of ward committees and public hearings/ meetings in section 2.5, the lack of trust in countries such as South Africa and the USA stems from the fact that at times citizens do not feel their views are actually considered in the decision-making. Therefore, they do not see any value in participating. Ipat (2015) adds that in countries such as South Africa, the USA and Switzerland, the lack of relevant information and feedback from government officials translates into disenchantment among the citizens as there is no accountability and transparency on the government side. This in the end leads to mistrust. The citizens begin to doubt that they actually have power to influence the final

decision and whether the government can really bring changes to their service delivery concerns (Ipat, 2015).

THE POWER STRUGGLE IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The notion of limited or no citizen power over the decisions made in the public participation process has recently been discussed in studies by several other authors (Botes and Van Rensburg, 2000; Mostert, 2003; Smith and Green, 2005; Kapa, 2013; Michels and Graaf, 2010). These studies assert that the public engagement process in South Africa, the Netherlands, the UK and the USA is important but in some cases is intentionally only being used as procedure to officialise already confirmed decisions. This opposes the whole objective of public.

Participation is meant to create a partnership with the citizens so that they are empowered and can share in decision-making. In this regard, Arnstein (1969) is of the view that public participation is not being done correctly and according to the evaluation framework she formed; public participation is meant to be about the distribution of decision-making power to those without, but this is not always happening. In her evaluation called a ladder of citizen participation, she presents a ladder with eight different levels of participation, and corresponding levels of citizen power presented in each level in which there are some levels she categorizes as false participation, as presented in diagram below.

ARNSTEIN (1969) LADDER OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION		
8	Citizen Control	Degree of citizen Power These three levels are considered the highest levels of participation in which citizens hold the majority of decision seats. Citizens actually can negotiate and can influence decision's made. Citizen control is the highest of them all. At this level citizens make the decisions. Whilst, at the delegated power level, the government facilitates the decision making process and funds it, but the citizens have autonomy to make decisions. At the Partnership level, the government and citizens work together. The citizens have a considerable amount of decision making power but the government still takes responsibility of overall decision.
7	Delegated Power	
6	partnership	
5	Placation	Degree of Tokenism Placation is the highest form of tokenism compared to level 4 and 3. All three levels enable citizens to hear and be heard, they can advise. However, they cannot guarantee that their views will be considered in the final decision
4	Consultation	
3	Informing	
2	Therapy	Considered non participation The objective of these two levels is just to enable the power holders (government officials) to educate the citizens of plans or decision's made. These platforms are not really committed to providing the citizens an opportunity to share their inputs. These two bottom levels are considered the lowest forms of participation
1	Manipulation	

The Arnstein (1969) Framework concludes that theoretically, citizen participation is applauded by governments but those in power (government officials) can still control the degree of power citizens have over decisions (Arnstein, 2015). The government officials

(those with power) tend to be the ones who determine the level of participation that citizens are permitted in, which then impacts the level of power citizens actually have in the public participation process. The South African Government references Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participations in their National Policy Framework for Public participation of 2007 (DPLG, 2007). South African National Policy adds that the level of power citizens have is often controlled by the mechanisms the government officials use, e.g. if they use the mechanism of pamphlets or notices it falls under Level One on the ladder, informing which is lowest form of participation (DPLG, 2007). According to Greenberg and Mathotho (2010) South Africa's public participation ranges from tokenism to partnership.

The sharing of power in decisions is still a challenge in South Africa and as pointed out in the Public Commission (2008) assessment, the leaders were observed to be against the sharing of power with the citizens. Regarding South Africa, Botes and van Rensburg (2000:45) contend that "for the state, it appears that the main aim of community participation programmes is less about improving conditions for the poor than maintaining existing power relations in society ensuring silence of the poor". In this study, the experts felt that they knew what was best for the citizens regarding urban planning in South Africa. The effect of the stance of the experts was that the citizens were present just to accept the decisions that had already made (Botes and Van Rensburg, 2000). In the same vein, South African authors Buccus, Hemson, Hicks and Piper (2007) corroborate the conclusion that regardless of the mechanisms used in South Africa, the public participation process is being manipulated to limit citizen power. They argue that "the opportunities created for public participation, whether through ward committees or public meetings, are overwhelmingly forms of public consultation rather than the actual participation of civil society or local communities in decision-making or implementation" (Buccus et al., 2007:6).

Kapa (2013) focused on the local government policy formulation and implementation processes in Lesotho. His study assesses the role of Area Chiefs as key stakeholders in the policy formation process and he concludes that rather than promote the participation of Area Chiefs as key stakeholders in this policy formation process, the notion of public

participation is used by the government to marginalise them from the decision making (Kapa, 2017). It is evident from the findings of Kapa's study that although those in power, in this case the government officials, do not dispute the value and benefits of public participation, they do not always adhere to the principles of public participation. The government is not sharing the power and continues to control who participates and who does not, when and how and at what level.

Other international authors (Few, Brown and Tompkins, 2007; Michels and Graaf, 2016) also recognize the issue of limited citizen power. According to Michels and Graaf (2016) the analysis of citizen participation in issues pertaining to climate change in the Netherlands, the citizens' role is limited to providing information to the government. In this study the citizens are found to have no power over the final decision and all decision-making rests with the government. Few et al (2007) argue that in the UK limitation of citizen power in climate change matters is not so much an attempt to undermine the relevance of citizens' participation but is rather a factor of the complexity or urgency of the issues needing to be addressed. According to Few et al. (2007) public participation is advocated for in climate change policy. However, involving multiple stakeholders proves challenging as decisions pertaining to climate change risks require a faster time response (Few et al. ,2007).

2.8 DEFINING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE WATER AND SANITATION SECTOR

Public participation has been considered key to water and sanitation management by a number of international scholars over the years (House, 1999; Dungumaro and Madulu, 2003; Mostert, 2003; Priscoli, 2004; Franceys and Gerlach, 2011) . Most of the studies that have discussed the value of public participation which is at times referred to as stakeholder or citizen participation in this sector are based outside of South Africa, but the general understanding of public participation is in line with the South Africa definition.

Mosert (2003:1) defines public participation as “a direct participation by non-government actors in decision –making”. The term ‘direct participation’ encompasses a number of activities such as written comments, referenda, water users association and protests. According to Mosert (2003) in his discussion of public participation challenges in Europe, “water development and management should be based on a participatory approach involving users, planners and policy makers at all levels” (Mostert, 2003:1). Based on Franceys and Gerlach (2011) case studies in Argentina, Ghana, Uganda, Zambia Chile, India and Kenya it was noted that stakeholder participation could usefully act as the missing feedback link between water service providers and consumers. Consumer involvement is important as it promotes good governance and leads to more successful development. House (1999) also recognizes the importance of public involvement as seen in her study in England where public / citizen participation led to the sustainable management of river basins. Citizen participation was seen as having potential to resolve conflict over the use of the rivers.

International studies (CIS Working Group 2.9, 2003; De Stefano, Hernández-Mora, López-Gunn, Willaarts, and Zorrilla-Miras, 2012; Newig, Challies, Jager, and Kochskämper, 2014) contend that in the water and sanitation sector, citizens should have power to influence the outcome of the policies decided upon and how to implement the policies agreed. Mosert (2003:181) emphasises that public participation in the water sector leads to a number of positive outcomes such “as better informed and more creative decision making, helps to ensure everyone is heard, enhanced democracy important information becomes available, social learning of all involved environmentally and economically sustainable water management and greater acceptance of decisions with fewer delays”.

In the context of the rural water and sanitation setting in South Africa, public participation is described as a continuous process of interaction between service providers and the community with the goal of improving decision-making in all phases of projects from planning through to implementation and evaluation (1381/1/04, 2004). This executive summary also states that in order for public participation to be effective the service providers or project facilitators need to have a clear understanding of the traditions and

customs of the community (1381/1/04, 2004). Public participation in the environmental sector in South Africa is described as being about the communication of views and the handling of the concerns expressed by the public. Public participation should be an all-inclusive voice about the views of all citizens including women, the youth, the disabled and the poor through various mechanisms. The environmental sector in South Africa uses a range of mechanisms recommended in the national policy framework for public participation of 2007. The mechanisms include public meetings, ward committees, newspapers to provide notices, and also have to consider petitions. In addition South Africa's environmental management framework law called the NEMA Section 2(4) (g) states that decisions made must take into account the interests, values and knowledge of all affected and interested parties including both traditional and general knowledge (Plessis, 2008).

In the CIS paper (2003), there is a specification of three different levels of participation that are ideal for the water and sanitation sector in Luxembourg and these are, namely, information supply, consultation and active involvement. Information supply refers to providing public access to information on the decision-making processes related to fresh water management. Consultation requires that interested parties are accorded opportunity to respond to the plans and proposals drawn up by authorities. Finally, active involvement refers to the practice of actively involving stakeholders in the decision-making process (CIS Working Group 2.9, 2003). More recent authors such as Newig, Challies, Jager, & Kochskamper (2014) concur with De Stefano (2010) and the CIS Working Group 2.9 (2003) with regard to the three levels of public participation in the water sector.

According to Newig et al (2014) the absence of standardised rules as to which mechanisms should be used may be a good thing in that it gives leeway for people in Europe to choose the participatory mechanisms they prefer. However, this also increases the possibilities of people resorting to non-participatory methods, thereby defeating the purpose of public participation in the making and carrying out of decisions for the water sector. South Africa also permits local municipalities to choose which mechanisms work best for their communities, although ward committees are mandatory as stipulated in the Municipal

Systems Act of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2000). All mechanisms have their strengths and weaknesses, hence it is recommended to use a range at the same time as no single mechanism can ensure the goals of public participation (Plessis, 2008)

2.9 CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE WATER AND SANITATION SECTOR

This section is focused on the implementation challenges of public participation in the water and sanitation sector. Most of the general challenges presented in section 2.6 also apply to this sector, particularly with regard to resource limitations, unskilled staff and power struggles over decisions.

POOR COMMUNICATION

Research findings by Franceys and Gerlach (2011) reflect that citizens are often eager to participate in issues pertaining to improving access to water by citizens. However, poor communication between the municipalities and citizens continues to be a challenge given that the limited access to available communication channels has not yet been fully-addressed. Access to information is crucial to public participation and is also a requirement for citizens to make informed decisions (Franceys and Gerlach, 2011).

INADEQUATE HUMAN RESOURCES AND FINANCES

Green and Smith (2005) illustrate how the lack of resources such as adequate finances and skilled staff contributed to the poor quality of participation in South Africa in the water and sanitation sector. These challenges have been prevalent over the years, particularly in smaller, local municipalities, especially in the Eastern Cape (Smith and Green, 2005; Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2009; Mescht and Jaarsveld, 2012; 3SMedia, 2013). Some Local municipalities in South Africa are described as having insufficient capacity to attend to the exerting demands of the issues that arise because they lack scarce skills (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2009)

POWER ISSUES IN DECISION MAKING

Mostert (2003) observes that governments in Europe are often not committed to listening to what the citizens are saying and at times only incorporate public participation at a very late stage when not much change can take place. This was evident in Smith and Green's (2005) study on water service delivery in Pietermaritzburg (in South Africa) which found that decisions had been made at high office levels and that the public had been excluded. Over and above Government reticence to allow proper engagement with the citizens, municipal leaders were unreachable and this added to the sense of powerlessness that the citizens felt (Smith and Green, 2005). This was evident in the Silverton sanitation project in which decisions were made by the government to go ahead and install toilets without consulting the community committee. The consequence of this error was the kindling of strong resistance to the toilet projects by community members (Western Cape High, Court, 2011). The community committee was only consulted after the government had met fierce resistance (Western Cape High Court, 2011). Even though the government eventually introduced the community committee, the citizens had become disinterested and dissatisfied.

House (1999), like others before him, raised concerns around decision-making power in the water and sanitation sector. In her case in England, public participation exists but in a less-formal manner with citizens not allowed to be directly involved in the decision-making process. Citizens can only comment on already made government plans for the river or for the development of the river area. They were, however, free to state their preferences and what they actually want to use the river for, but there was no guarantee that their views would be considered (House, 1999).

2.10 EVALUATION OF PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS IN THE WATER AND SANITATION SECTOR

Whenever participatory mechanisms have been evaluated, the overwhelming focus has tended to be on discussion around their weaknesses and strengths without at the same

time doing anything to determine whether such discussion helps achieve the intended goals of public participation (Cullen, 2001; McComas, 2001; Carson and Gelber, 2001; Tshabalala, 2007; Queenslanders Government, 2011). In addition, there is limited research in the water sanitation sector that analyses the efficiency of the various mechanisms in promoting the objectives/ goals of public participation. Most of the research that exists tends to be not the most recent.

Owing to the fact that participatory mechanisms involve sections of communities that are often excluded from the decision-making process, they have, since 1993, assumed greater significance and become more useful to the water and sanitation sector (Narayan-Parker, 1993). This is largely because participatory mechanisms provide an opportunity to build confidence and trust, especially in poor communities (Narayan-Parker, 1993). Given that women play a pivotal role in water management, this study consequently concerns itself with gender sensitivity in the deployment of participatory mechanisms.

WARD COMMITTEE

In some cases ward committees have proven useful in the water and sanitation sector, whilst in other cases they were not the preferred participatory mechanism. According to Cavill and Sohail (2004) explored the increasing interest in accountability and potential of participatory governance in improving the provision of urban services including water and sanitation services. Ward committee members in South Africa were criticized for not consulting the public in making decisions. Ward committee members were also accused of being politicized with members openly showing their party alliances during meetings. Overall this tended to derail the interests of the community.

PUBLIC MEETINGS/HEARINGS

Public meetings/ hearings have proven more effective in some cases in South Africa. As discussed in the Water and Sanitation report, launched by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), through the public hearings held in 2012 the SAHRC was able to successfully identify communities struggling with water and sanitation problems, address

issues, give their views and work with the communities as a team and formulate solutions (South African Rights Commission, 2014). However, in other cases public meetings were not found favourable due to the lack of trust in government officials to take the citizens views into consideration for decision-making. This made the citizens feel undervalued (Ebdon, 2002; De Boer, Vinke-de Kruijf, Özerol, and Bressers, 2013). According to De Boer et al (2013) in their assessment of water management, the lack of trust that their views would be made to matter is one of the main reasons why citizens in Europe, North America and Asia have been reluctant to attend meetings in the water sector. Even in South Africa, citizens in some cases, were seen not to be participating in the public meetings in the political sector. Nevertheless, their reluctance to participate was for reasons other than the lack of trust. In fact, it was found that their non-participation was occasioned by their lack of interest.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are recognized and recommended as a participation mechanism in the public participation process. Yee (2010) examined the role of stakeholder engagement in river health monitoring and environmental flows in Australia and China and in his paper discusses the usefulness of focus groups in the water sector. According to Yee (2010) focus groups are used to obtain a range of qualitative data including attitudes, feelings and beliefs about an issue or issues. This method helps to obtain the various views that point to a particular topic. Yee (2010) adds that for a skilled facilitator plays a big role in the success of the focus group discussion. The findings of the study also showed that the data obtained from focus groups can assist in depicting problems early in the planning process as well as present feedback and alternative solutions. Focus groups are also useful in the monitoring and reassessment process of previous intervention actions or plans (Yee, 2010).

LOUDHAILER

The loudhailer as a mechanism cannot be put to investigative use in the context of public participation in the water and sanitation sector. Even though it is one of the most used

mechanisms in rural communities, there is no research analysing its effectiveness in this mechanism in this sector. This further validates the importance of this research.

PAMPHLETS/ NEWSLETTERS

There also seems to be an absence of literature pertaining to the use of pamphlets or newsletters in the public participation process specifically in the water and sanitation sector. This further affirms the relevance of this study to the water and sanitation sector.

2.11 CONCLUSION

Chapter two defined public participation based on a number of scholars and in the context of this study. This section also presented the desired outcomes of publication and the challenges in trying to obtain these outcomes. It also covered the various mechanisms used in the public participation process and highlighted the absence of literature on mechanisms such as pamphlets in the water and sanitation sector. The next chapter provides a detailed discussion of the methodology used to investigate this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The choice of design and methodology chosen for this study was guided by the research questions asked. In this regard, the questions asked revolved around the South African rural public's perceptions on whether or not the participatory mechanisms used in the water and sanitation sector achieve the intended goals of public participation.

To address the issue of the rural public's perceptions on the effectiveness of the chosen participatory mechanisms, the following sub-questions were posed:

1. What participatory mechanisms within the legal frameworks for public participation in South Africa have rural citizens engaged in?
2. What are the perceptions of rural South African citizens on participatory mechanisms?

This chapter provides details of the research methodology, including the strategy and the research design adopted. It is also an account of the research process and a discussion of the data analysis techniques employed by the study. The chapter also introduces the theoretical framework used to guide the study and present its findings.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Since the purpose of the study was to understand rural citizens' lived experiences and perceptions of participatory mechanisms, the researcher adopted a phenomenological methodology. Phenomenological approaches are concerned with understanding experiences through the perspectives of individuals. Phenomenological approaches fall under the philosophical stance of interpretivism (Denscombe, 2010). Methodologies informed by phenomenological approaches illuminate the knowledge and understanding from a subject's personal perspective (Lester, 1998). This was an important consideration for this study. The researcher was able to obtain in-depth knowledge of the manner in

which citizens perceived the participatory mechanisms used in rural areas with regard to whether or not they achieved the intended outcomes/goals of public participation. Assessment involved reflecting on South Africa's legislation pertaining to public participation in decision-making processes through the use of Beierle's framework (1998). Beierle's framework is discussed in more detail under section 3.2.1.

Phenomenology is considered useful in "understanding the subjective experience, views, actions, and assumptions as perceived by individuals" (Lester, 1999:1). The use of phenomenology was useful in exploring the perceptions of the participants in terms of the impact of their lived experiences of public participation when engaging in the various participatory mechanisms.

Phenomenology can be applied to one area or more and to deliberately selected samples (Lester, 1999). In this case it was applied to two rural local municipalities in the Eastern Cape. Consequently, the study adopted a case study strategy and focused on six rural towns within the two local municipalities of Ndlambe and Kou- Kamma. A case study approach enables one to study a particular phenomenon in depth, regardless of whether it is a group or a subject. In this way the researcher aligns his study with the principles of phenomenology (Bradford University School of Management, n.d.). In this study, it was essential to use the strategy of a case study because the rural environments are cases in themselves, and in-depth analysis was only possible if specific cases were studied as opposed to examining full publication samples. The researcher intended to compare the reality of rural people's experiences of public participation and the idea that others have of that reality. Accordingly, the study required direct engagement with the rural citizens within their community as well as observation and exploration of how they perceive the public participation process and its corresponding mechanisms. In order to obtain the required views and insights, the researcher had to interact with a number of people in a number of communities to obtain information from their lived reality regarding what works and what does not work for them.

One of the advantages of using the case study strategy is that it allows the researcher to use a variety of methods and sources to obtain data and when analysing the data (Denscombe, 2010). The researcher therefore used a mixed-methods approach, comprised of a mixture of data-collection tools such as semi-structured interviews, focus groups, field notes, recordings and participant observation.

Prior to embarking on the collection of data the researcher first identified the various participatory mechanisms available for engagement in accordance with South African legislation. These included methods such as focus groups, public meetings/hearings, public notice mechanisms (posters, pamphlets, and news media, radio), as well as loudhailer and ward committees (DPLG, 2007; Public Service Commission, 2008). In this context, local municipalities have the freedom to use whichever mechanisms they deem suitable for their community (The Local Government Handbook, 2016). The researcher then went into the communities and identified the mechanisms that the citizens had participated in.

This interaction with the rural communities helped answer sub-question one. The second sub-question required that the researcher obtain the citizen's perspectives of the mechanisms that they had engaged with, and this was achieved through the use of interviews. Beierle (1998) in the Theoretical Framework Using Social Goals, described in the next section, was used as a guideline in formulating the interview questions as well as in the analysis process. The researcher formulated the interview questions by adapting Beierle's original questions so as to suit the focus of the study which was a questioning of the participatory mechanisms, not the public participation process.

3.2.1 AN EVALUATION FRAMEWORK USING SOCIAL GOALS BY BEIERLE 1998

The Beierle Framework (1998) evaluates the intended outcomes of the public participation process. This framework has proved useful in evaluating the public participation process and the mechanisms used to involve the public in environmental decision-making. The mechanisms include traditional methods such as public hearings, notice and comment procedures, focus groups, advisory committees, as well as more recent methods such as

regulatory negotiations, mediations and citizen juries. Beierle (1998) uses a set of outcomes in the form of six goals which are presented in table 1 below:

TABLE 1 BEIERLE'S (1998) SIX GOALS REFLECTING INTENDED OUTCOMES OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

	Beierle (1998) Evaluation Framework Using Social Goals
Goal 1	Educating and informing the public
Goal 2	Incorporating public values, assumptions, and preferences into decision-making
Goal 3	Improving the substantive quality of decisions
Goal 4	Increasing trust in institutions
Goal 5	Reducing conflict
Goal 6	Achieving cost-effectiveness

Most of the participatory mechanisms cited in the Beierle (1998) Evaluation Framework as used in the environment sector were also found to be in use in the Eastern Cape. The framework also presents the aspects of public participation that practitioners need to consider when selecting mechanisms for the public participation process. For the purpose of this study the researcher focused on the evaluation of the mechanisms and how they affect the public participation process rather than evaluating the process itself.

GOAL 1: EDUCATING AND INFORMING THE PUBLIC

The first goal of the Beierle Evaluation Framework suggests that the citizens involved in the public participation process should have adequate information to enable them to make informed decisions and useful contributions in liaison with Government and the attendant

experts. In order to achieve this goal, the public needs to be well-educated about the issues at hand including how the public participation process functions (Beierle, 1998). Educating the public ensures that the process is not held up by technical complexities or terms. A clear understanding of the potential consequences of their choices should form part of such a process. In order to assess if the first goal had been attained, the questions below, all informed by Beierle (1998), were used to solicit views:

- How many members of the public were actively involved in the participatory process or took advantage of the information and access provided to them?
- What percentage of the wider public was reached through education campaigns, media relations, or interaction with more active participants?
- Did the active public feel that they had sufficient knowledge to contribute to the deliberations and decision-making?
- Did members of the public understand their role in the participatory process?
- Was there sufficient time and money available to obtain credible, relevant and, if necessary, independent information?

GOAL 2: INCORPORATING PUBLIC VALUES, ASSUMPTIONS, AND PREFERENCES INTO DECISION-MAKING

The second goal is an extension of the first goal. While the first goal only aims at educating the public, the second one emphasises educating all stakeholders. The public participation process should involve all necessary members in the process of discussing emergent differences in values, assumptions and preferences surrounding the issue at hand (Beierle, 1998).

Below is a selection of relevant questions suggested by Beierle (1998) for measuring Goal 2:

-
- Was information from the public participation process used to inform or review the analyses or decisions arrived at?
 - Did the public feel that it had had an impact on the decisions?
 - Where public input was not incorporated into the analyses or decisions did the relevant agency provide a justification acceptable to the public?
 - Were all reasonably affected parties included or represented, particularly those with no formal organization?
 - Did participants reflect the larger "public" they were expected to represent, for example, in terms of socioeconomic criteria?
 - Were there mechanisms in place to hold participants accountable to the community which they represented?

GOAL 3: IMPROVING THE SUBSTANTIVE QUALITY OF DECISIONS

Goal three builds on from goal 2. Accordingly, the public need to be recognized as a source of facts and innovative alternatives to the problem at hand. Its input is deemed valuable and often assists in making technically difficult decisions more satisfying to a wider range of interested people. To ensure that this goal is attained, the knowledge obtained from the public should be used to identify mistakes, provide relevant factual information and generate alternatives. This would not be possible or accessible if the public did not contribute (Beierle, 1998).

Beierle suggests the following questions to help assess if participants were content with how information was obtained and if they thought the process had sufficiently involved them:

- Did the public involvement process clearly increase all parties' satisfaction with the outcome relative to the likely non-participatory outcome?
- Were new alternatives generated? Were new opportunities for trade-offs or compensation between parties identified?

-
- Were relevant new facts revealed that corrected or otherwise clearly improved the technical analysis?
 - Were decisions technically, financially, or otherwise achievable?

GOAL 4: INCREASING TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

This goal emphasizes the need for building trust in the public participation process. Involving the public in decision-making often empowers them. Empowering citizens is recognised as one of most effective ways of building trust or regaining trust in some instances. Trust is not an easy thing to measure and for that reason, a possible measure would be to assess if the public feel the agency, in this case municipality, is able to service the best interests of the people (Beierle, 1998).

The following questions were suggested by Beierle (1998) to assess trust:

- Does the public have confidence in the agency's technical abilities?
- Does the public feel that its interests are the same as the agency's interests or are at least valued by the agency?
- Would the agency be willing to turn over decision – making authority with less public oversight?

Trust and credibility of government are essential for public participation to succeed. Public participation is not effective in a case where citizens feel the government disregards their input. There are multiple dimensions to defining trust, a simple definition is “ a firm belief in the reliability , truth, ability or strength of someone or something”(Oxford, 2017:1). This definition is similar to the definition adopted by the National Policy Framework for Public Participation (2007:22) which advocates “faith and confidence in the integrity, sincerity, honesty and ability of the process and those facilitating the process”. This study adopts these definitions of trust and proceeds to assess the trust fuelled by each mechanism.

Therefore, this study measures the trust citizens have in the ability of government officials to deliver on their services or plans, and to actually see things change. It also measures the

trust of the citizens in the public participation process premised on the hope that the process will be sincere and their views will be taken into consideration in the decision-making process. Lastly, the study examines the trust of the citizens in the reliability, ability and integrity of government officials or ward committee in terms of fulfilling their official roles. This includes confidence in those facilitating, that they will be transparent and honest about the information they provide.

GOAL 5: REDUCING CONFLICT

This goal speaks to the fact that the public participation process may have some conflict in it. It may therefore be challenging to reach consensus on the common values, beliefs and views held by different stakeholders. However, platforms should be put in place where participants feel they can share their views and work together in resolving problems and identifying commonality. The decisions made in the public participation process should not be the forced views of one stakeholder but those from joint decisions. Providing space where people can discuss their differences enables the growth of healthy relationships which can reduce conflict.

Beierle (1998) suggests the following questions for Goal 5:

- Did public involvement reduce political or public opposition to the decision as reflected in testimony at public hearings, letters, in relevant news sources, the level of activism, or political debate?
- If an agreement was reached, was it stable over a reasonable period of time?
- Were there mechanisms for re-negotiation and discussion as information and situations changed?
- *Concerning relationships with a public agency:* Did public involvement improve the image of the agency (perceptions of trust, competence, etc.) in such a way that future issues may be easier to deal with?

-
- *Concerning relationships between other stakeholders:* Did public involvement improve or worsen communication and/or cooperation among interested parties during and after the process?

GOAL 6: ACHIEVING COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Goal 6 is about cost-effectiveness in choosing the ideal mechanism to engage with the public and not with the decision made through the process. Since there are a variety of mechanisms related to this goal, it looks at whether the right participatory mechanism is chosen for that process. This goal measures the mechanism based on how effective it was in terms of time, money, risk and opportunity for achieving the first 5 goals. For example, in some instances the researcher had to ask if public meetings would be more ideal than ward committee meetings.

In order to evaluate the goal of cost effectiveness the following questions can, according to Beierle (1998), be asked:

- How much did the public involvement process cost all participants in terms of time and money?
- What were the opportunity costs for all participants in terms of shifted resources and delayed action?
- What costs did the process help avoid?

The attainment of the six goals goes beyond the individual goals of the various stakeholders involved in the public participation process. The Beierle (1998) framework offers a hypothetical way of determining the extent to which various mechanisms attain the stated goals. Beierle determines the proficiency of the mechanisms by analysing them across four of their components as follows:

- Information flow (two-way, one-way and from who to who) and the degree of interaction among potentially opposing interested participants (view figure 1)

- The other two components are identified as type of representation and the decision-making role of the public (view Figure 2).

Beierle presents these in the graphic typology below:

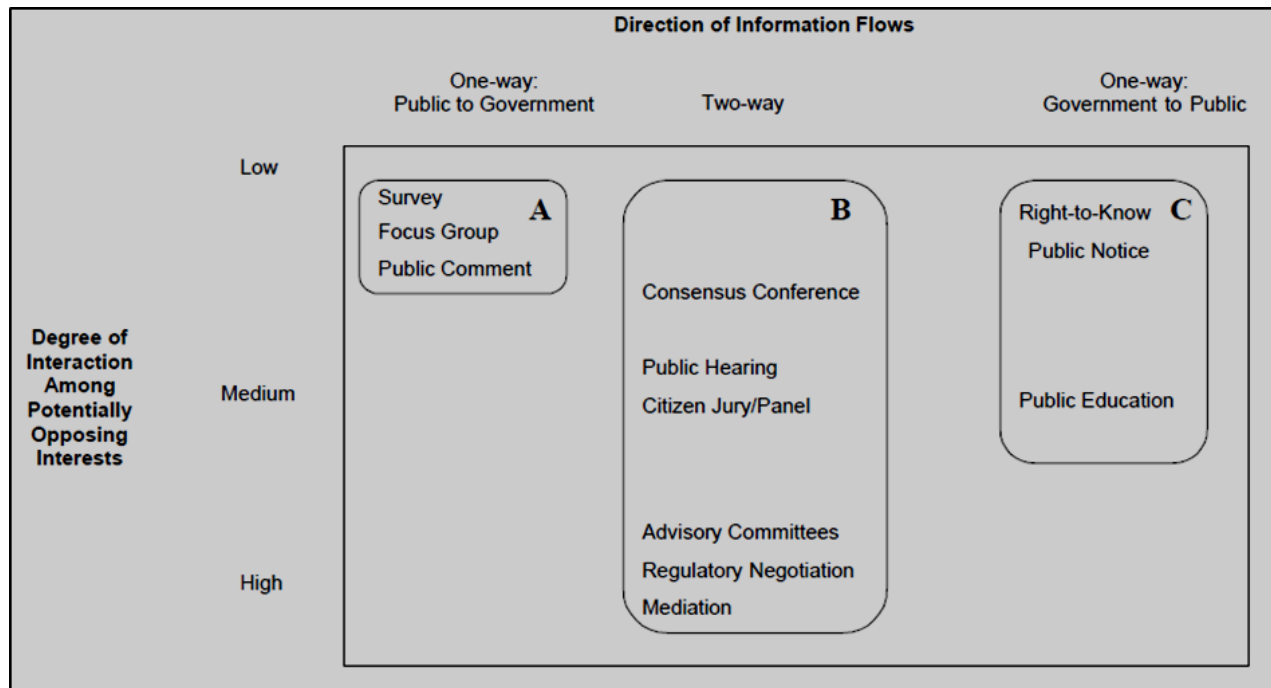


FIGURE 1 DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATING DIRECTION OF INFORMATION AND DEGREE OF INTERACTION

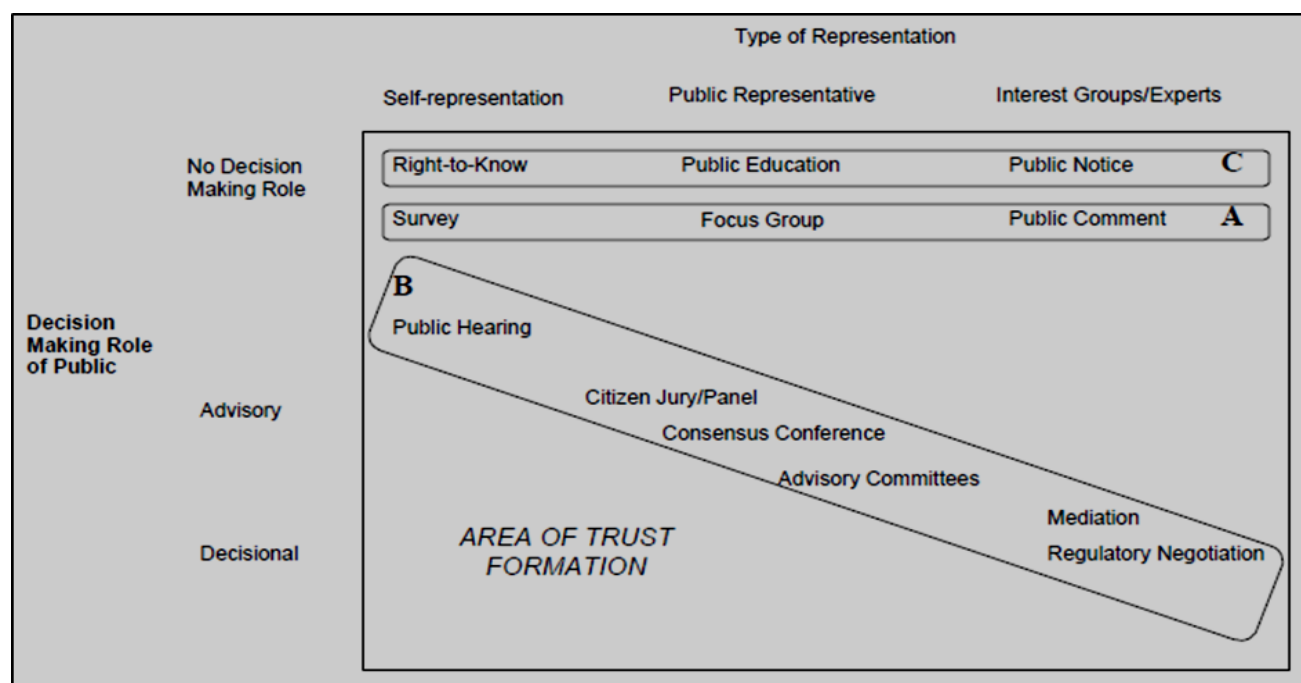


FIGURE 2 TYPES OF REPRESENTATION AND DECISION MAKING ROLE (Beierle, 1998)

EXPLANATION OF FIGURE 1 AND FIGURE 2 BY BEIERLE (1998)

FIGURE 1: INFORMATION FLOWS AND DEGREE OF INTERACTION AMONG POTENTIALLY OPPOSING INTERESTS

Figure 1 presents the mechanisms in three groups, Group A, B and C based on Beierle study. This table explains the direction of information flow (either one- way or two-way) and the degree of interaction between opposing parties promoted by each mechanism and how that affects the goals achieved. The overall aim of the table was to facilitate the task of selecting a mechanism that promotes the most effective type of engagement for both government and citizens, based on the six goals of participation mentioned.

Further scrutiny of the contents of the diagram in Figure 1, show that the mechanisms in Group A promote one-way communication flows from the public to the government. The mechanisms in this group include methods such as surveys and focus groups. According to

Beierle (1998), one-way communication channels give little and at times no room for discussion between two parties. He also explains why the mechanisms in Group A reflect low levels of interaction between opposing parties. Group A mechanisms are mainly useful in achieving Goal 2 and 3. To achieve this, decision-makers are provided with public values, assumptions, preferences, as well as with substantive information to improve upon the decisions (Beierle, 1998).

The mechanisms in Group B allow for a two-way flow of communication between the public and the government. The exchange of information between the two bodies increases the levels of interaction, although this varies from low to high depending on which methods are chosen (Beierle, 1998). As **Figure 1** shows, the census conference shows low levels of interaction, while public hearings and citizen jury/panels are categorized under medium levels of interaction, advisory groups, regulatory negotiation and mediation promote high levels of interaction between public and community (Beierle, 1998)?. The two-way communication flow mechanisms in group B promote the likelihood of achieving the first four goals as seen in Figure 1. Lastly Group C, which consists of public notices and public education, are viewed as one-way communication methods from government to the public (Beierle, 1998). The degree of interaction in group C ranges from low to medium as shown in Table 2 below. Group C methods are useful in increasing public knowledge and, to a certain extent, increase transparency and build trust in institutions. Group C therefore achieves Goals 1 and 2 view **Table 2**.

The conclusion Beierle (1998) presents in figure 1 is that the most ideal mechanisms are those that promote a higher degree of interaction and are most often two-way communication flows such as those in Group B. In addition, Beierle (1998) notes that the higher the degree of interaction between potentially opposed interests, the greater the chance of reducing conflict among stakeholders. This principle addresses Goal 5. The occurrence of less conflict indicates better acceptance levels of the decisions made.

FIGURE 2: TYPE OF REPRESENTATION AND DECISION-MAKING ROLES

Figure 2 illustrates how the type of representation chosen affects the decision-making role. This table also presents the goals achieved through each representation. As reflected in figure 2, the mechanisms by which the public represent themselves through direct participation, as exemplified in public hearings and surveys, will be better at attaining Goal 1 on educating and Goal 4 on trust formation than when the general public are represented by the views of representatives (See Figure 2 in Beierle, 1998).

The mechanisms in Group B, particularly the use of a citizen jury panels, consensus conferences and advisory committees, give the public a direct decision-making role thus making it easier to accomplish Goal 4. Beierle (1998) concluded that the mechanisms used in Group C and A do not give the public a decision-making role. Methods that give the public a direct decision-making role such as those in Group B, make it easier to accomplish the trust and formation relevant to Goal 4 (Beierle, 1998).

Trust is vital in decision-making; the Beierle framework (1998) shows that in an ideal situation trust formation would be greatest where the public is both self-represented and also plays a role in decision-making. However, none of the methods provide such an opportunity (Beierle, 1998). In relation to this study, the researcher used the content of Figure 2 in Beierle (1998) to assist in the analysis and discussion around the decision-making power the participants felt each mechanism projected.

The Beierle (1998) framework provides a table that links the mechanisms that may best be used to achieve the goals of this study. A reductionist approach was used to match each mechanism with the goal intended (view Table 2). Accordingly, the table depicts the goals that each mechanism is likely to achieve. The mechanisms were rated as follows: 'Applicable' if it could definitely achieve the goal; 'Not applicable' if it did not achieve the goal at all; and the third option was 'Maybe applicable' where the degree of certainty was the same as the degree of uncertainty.

TABLE 2 BEIERLE'S REDUCTIONIST APPROACH MATCHING MECHANISMS TO GOALS

Mechanisms	Goal 1		Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6
	education	information	public values	substantive quality	trust	reduced conflict	cost-effectiveness
Non-Deliberative Mechanisms for Obtaining Information From the Public							
Survey	○	○	●	●	○	○	●
Focus group	○	○	●	●	○	○	●
N & C Rulemaking	○	○	●	●	○	○	●
Non-deliberative Mechanisms for Providing Information to the Public							
Information provision	◐	●	○	○	●	○	●
Public Notice	○	◐	○	○	◐	○	○
Public education	●	◐	○	○	●	○	●
Traditional Mechanisms							
Public hearing	○	●	●	●	◐	◐	●
Citizen Advisory Ctte.	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●
Public Deliberation							
Citizen Juries/Panels	●	◐	●	●	◐	◐	●
Consensus Conference	●	◐	●	●	○	◐	●
Alternative Dispute Resolution							
Mediation	○	○	●	●	◐	●	●
Regulatory Negotiation	○	○	◐	●	◐	●	●

○ = not applicable; ◐ = may be applicable; ● = applicable

HOW BEIERLE'S FRAMEWORK WAS USED AS A GUIDELINE IN THE STUDY

The researcher adjusted the questions below each goal and formulated a new semi-structured interview question using the original question from Beierle as a guideline (**view Annexure B and C**). The researcher chose this framework in recognition of the work done by Thomas Beierle and Jerry Crayford (2002) in their 30 years of research around the public participation process. The purpose of their study was to promote public participation (Gross, 2001). Over the 30 years, Beierle and Crayford successfully conducted over 239 case studies involving public participation and assessed the process based on the six social goals they recommend. This researcher then adapted and used the same six goals to assess the public participatory mechanisms of the Eastern Cape. The difference between the Beierle approach and that used in this study is that Beierle examines the mechanisms based on his perceptions where this study focuses on the citizens' views. Using the comments from the participants, the researcher was able to identify the type of communication, degree of interaction and level of decision-making promoted by each mechanism. This done, a comparison with the Beierle framework became possible. The

resultant findings are presented in Chapter Five in the sections on data analysis and the findings.

Informed by Beierle's reductionist approach of matching mechanisms (Table 2) as a model, the researcher was able to draw up similar tables for each community and match the mechanisms to the six goals that the public participation process ought to achieve (See the analysis tables in chapter five). The framework was used as an assessment tool for determining which mechanisms the citizens perceived as applicable, not applicable or unsure in terms of achieving the intended goals of public participation.

Overall the designed framework helped the researcher assess the performance of each mechanism in achieving the six goals identified by Beierle (1998) based on participant ratings. This enabled the researcher to obtain the public perspectives on the various participatory mechanisms, which is the purpose of phenomenology to explore people's perceptions and understand matters from their experiences. By using the Beierle evaluation framework the researcher was able to determine the mechanisms the participants felt promoted the type of genuine participation that empowers citizens and encourages an effective partnership relationship.

3.2.3 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

The data collection process was divided into two phases. The first phase was conducted between the 15th of April in 2014 to the 19th of April in 2014 when a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data was obtained. The second phase involved qualitative interviews which were conducted the following year between 13 March 2015 to the 19th of March 2015 as a follow up and to gain more data. Although the researcher informed the municipality of her intended visit, she used the ward councilors to assist in gathering the participants in each town. Community meetings were held at the main community hall in each town and once the study was explained those who volunteered to participate remained behind at the end of the meeting. Having signed the consent forms, the participants were advised that they were free to exit the study if they desired (Annexure

A). The stakeholders involved in the study were predominantly the ordinary local members of each town together with a few ward committee members who decided to participate.

The reason for the two phases was that when the first set of interviews were conducted, the ICT tool which had been introduced as a Government initiative had not yet become functional. Since the researcher wanted to obtain views on all available mechanisms the researcher set out to conduct a second set of interviews focusing on the ICT tool. In addition, the researcher wanted to obtain more in-depth detail of the participants' views to build upon the first interviews. In both phases the Beierle (1998) framework of Social Goals was adapted and used as a guideline in designing the interview questions. In both phases the researcher noted all the observations on what happened at each interview. The findings section in Chapter Five has a clear outline of the observations made.

FIRST PHASE OF INTERVIEWS

The first phase involved a combination of qualitative processes and quantitative aspects, in which semi-structured interviews were conducted with the use of focus groups where a Likert scale questionnaire with open-ended questions was administered (Annexure B). The Beierle (1998) Framework of social goals was used to formulate questions aimed at obtaining the participants' perspectives on the various mechanisms. The Likert scale questionnaire presented the participants with an opportunity to rate their perceptions on each mechanism, relative to the six goals suggested by the Beierle Evaluation Framework (1998).

The participants were able to do their rating with the guidance of a set of directive questions. The same questions were asked for each mechanism and the participants indicated their decisions using the descriptors 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'not sure', and 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'. Annexure D indicates which questions were linked to which goal for each mechanism for both interview phases. Participants often volunteered more information than requested and also elaborated further on why they had agreed, disagreed or said they were unsure. This gave room for vital additional information to be

gathered. Through these interviews the researcher was also able to identify which mechanisms the participants were familiar with and what their perceptions on the mechanisms were, including the strengths and challenges associated with the mechanisms. Following this, the researcher was able to determine which mechanisms participants felt achieved the intended goals of public participation.

Due to the low literacy levels and the language barrier in some instances, the translator and researcher had to assist the participants by reading out the questions, explaining them further and taking note of how many agreed or disagreed for each question. In some cases the participants did not answer some of the questions. The researcher recorded the interviews, diarized her observations and made field notes with direct quotes of what participants had said. The use of the Likert scale helped keep the participants keep in line with the research question. It also made it easier to respond considering the language barrier. Each answer option was given a value on a scale of 1 to 5 (strongly agree (5), agree (4), not sure (3), disagree 2 and strongly disagree (1) and the participants' responses were captured on a spreadsheet. The more in-depth data was recorded and the quotes from field notes were captured in word. Table 3 and 4 present the sample of participants from each municipality.

SECOND PHASE OF INTERVIEWS

In the second data-collection phase, the researcher used focus groups to generate more discussion around the ICT tool in comparison to other pre-existing mechanisms. A semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was used to facilitate the focus groups (Annexure C). The interview questions were also guided by the questions suggested in Beierle's Framework (1998). Annexure D shows which questions were directed at which goal. Babbie & Mouton (2001) state that the advantage of using semi-structured interviews is that the predetermined questions guide the researcher during the interview and enable her to adhere to the objectives of the research and the interview (Babbie & Mouton, 2001a). The use of open-ended questions increased the opportunity for participants to express themselves more as noted by Vos et al (2005). Although the participants could speak English, on occasion they needed Xhosa translations. Due to the language differences

between the participants and the researcher, it was necessary that the questions were clear in order to reduce the chances of valuable details being lost in the translation. The interviews were recorded and the field notes taken; the participants were more comfortable with notes being taken. They felt that the researcher was listening and taking what they had to say into account. Not all the recordings were clear, so the researcher transcribed what was clear and also relied on the detailed field notes of what the participants had said. Having written down information ensures that there is a backup in the event that anything happens to the recordings. Written information also makes it easier to analyse the data gathered (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The participants seemed distracted by the recorder and thus tacitly expressed a preference for notes being taken, a process which made them feel they were being heard.

The focus groups allowed room for wider discussion on how, in terms of achieving the intended goals of public participation as defined by Beierle (1998) and in comparison with other mechanisms, the ICT tool was used. In these interviews the researcher was able to obtain additional data on citizens' opinions regarding the other mechanisms.

As suggested by Neville (2007), the researcher was able to obtain more information on the social structure of the communities, through the use of group interviews. This was done through observation in the community in which the study was conducted. Neville (2007) advises that it is easier to identify the cultural norms of society through holding group meetings within the community under study.

Some of the knowledge gathered was with regard to the value of face to face interaction, particularly with ward councillors, and how literacy levels in a community affect participation. The use of focus groups encouraged participants to engage and also gave the researcher an opportunity to probe further into the issue of public participation and gain different perspectives on the various mechanisms. As highlighted by the Queensland Government (2011), facilitating more than one focus group in various communities on a common issue is recognized as a useful way of obtaining a better understanding, from

multiple perspectives, of both what the problem is and what the solution/s to that problem are. The researcher took this insight into consideration.

Focus groups in this study were also effective in terms of the logistics; it was easier to meet all the participants from each town in one central place that they were familiar with. Although the focus groups were ideally supposed to consist of 14 people, at times more people than expected attended. It would have appeared rude to dismiss the extra volunteers. Furthermore, there was value in the additional input, as it did not distort the results. The sessions were about an hour long. Freeman (2006) advises that the ideal group size is 6 – 12 participants and that the sessions should be no longer than 2 hours. The researcher tried to keep to the recommended size and time frame of the group discussions as recommended by Freeman (2006). This made the focus groups manageable for the researcher and the people in each group were able to concentrate.

Nevertheless, there were challenges in that some of the participants, mainly women, seemed hesitant to talk. This is an issue also highlighted as a limitation to focus groups by the Queensland Government (2011). In order to address this, the researcher made sure to probe the hesitant members and assured them that there was no right or wrong answer. This assurance had the desired effect in that the women thereafter appeared to be more comfortable. In order to encourage everyone to speak the researcher asked each participant in turn if they wanted to say anything.

The other reason for the lack of response to some of the questions was that some participants had not heard of or used the ICT tool before. In towns where people had not used the ICT tool some participants spoke about what they thought about the initiative, and how they thought it could have been better advertised. They also expressed their views as they normally did with the other methods used in engaging Government. At times the participants went off topic because they could not comment on the ICT tool. In such an event the participants introduced issues that were completely different from the question on the table. The researcher was able to gather interesting findings about the relationship between citizens and municipalities and get greater insights into a variety of issues.

3.2. 4 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

The researcher used purposive sampling to select the participants, as mentioned in Chapter One. Accordingly, this study stems from a larger study and the researcher needed to use the same participants. In this study the participants had to be local to the rural areas of Ndlambe and Kou-Kamma, and specifically from three towns. In Ndlambe, Bathurst, Port Alfred and Alexandria were used whilst in Kou-Kamma participants were from Joubertina, Storms River and Kareedouw. Purposive sampling is especially useful when a research is investigating a specific characteristic; in this case it was the rural citizens within the two municipalities (Babbie and Mouton, 2001b). For the purpose of this study, the researcher did not interview the municipality because the focus was to obtain the perspectives of the citizens in order to identify which mechanisms they preferred as a means of encouraging public participation.

The number of participants interviewed for this study was a total of 181 people (view Table 3 and Table 4). The first phase had a total of 81 participants while the second phase had 100 participants. The increase in number was due to the improved availability of participants. The meetings happened at the times recommended by ward councillors and these were either 10 am, 3 pm or 5 pm.

3.2.5 DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Most participants were unemployed and had low educational attainment levels. This characteristic was identified and noted as a common challenge in the municipalities under study (refer to site description in chapter 4). This observation must be seen against the fact that public participation is for all, whether educated or uneducated. The low levels of literacy are likely to have affected how participants felt about mechanisms such as the pamphlets. However, since literacy levels are a true reflection of the context of South Africa's rural public, the assessment of the methods has to include this aspect. Although public participation is meant to be all-inclusive, compared to other groups, the youth appear to be less well-represented at the meetings. The majority of participants were

unemployed and over 47 years. This research has a significant lack of participants with higher education or who are members of the skilled work force. Indications are that this is largely due to the times the meetings were scheduled for. In the diagrams that follow, Tables 3 and 4 presents the ages and numbers of respondents from each town in both municipalities.

TABLE 3 NDLAMBE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY RESPONDENTS

Community: NDLAMBE	First phase 15.04.2014- 19.04.2014	Second phase 12 .03. 2015- 19.03.2015	Age
Port Alfred (B1)	15	15	20 -35
Bathurst (B2)	7	37	30-60
Alexandria (B3)	14	15	25-57 (majority 35+)

TABLE 4 KOU-KAMMA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY RESPONDENTS

Community: KOU- KAMMA	First phase 15.04.2014 – 19 .04.2014	Second Phase 12 .03. 2015- 19.03.2015	Age
Kareedouw(A1)	15	11	26-54+
Storms River (A2)	17	7	27-57 (majority 35+)
Joubertina (A3)	13	15	22-54 (+)

3.2.6 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

This section describes the analysis process. The analysis process was divided into two phases. For the data collected in the first phase of data collection the researcher captured the responses of all 81 participants on a spreadsheet. As mentioned earlier the researcher obtained quantitative and qualitative data from the interviews and noted the number of people who agreed or disagreed, and those who were unsure. A value was assigned to each response; 5(Strongly agree), 4(agree), where people were unsure the value was (3) and where they disagreed it was 2 whilst the strongly disagree response was 1. The researcher used a quantitative analysis to calculate the mode in order to determine how the majority viewed each mechanism. The researcher used the mode instead of the average because there was skewed data. A quantitative assessment was useful for expressing in numbers how many citizens perceived each mechanism as being capable of achieving the intended outcomes of public participation described by Beierle (1998). Although the data were quantitative in nature, they were supported by the additional information and in-depth responses from the open-ended questions of the interview. From this data the researcher was able to draw tables similar to those from Beierle's reductionist approach table linking mechanisms to goals (Table 2).

In the second phase of data collection, the researcher also analysed the field notes and transcripts and did this through thematic analysis. As with the first phase, the researcher coded all relevant phrases under each theme. Thematic analysis offers a very systematic way to analyse massive qualitative data through identifying patterns and themes in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Using this process the researcher collated the perceptions of the participants regarding the ICT tool. Based on the acquired feedback the researcher was able to determine the extent to which rural citizens perceive the ICT tool as one capable of achieving the desired outcomes. Any other content gathered in these interviews pertaining to the other traditional mechanisms was coded under these mechanisms. Although this process was time- consuming, it nevertheless was a defining feature of the

qualitative analysis of the data. The researcher had to read the data several times to highlight what fell under each theme.

The data obtained from both phases was useful in the designing of tables similar to that of Beierle (1998) (view table 2) that reflect rural citizens' perceptions as well as in providing an in-depth discussion of the mechanisms. After completing the analysis tables for each town, the researcher analysed the data across all six towns from the municipalities. Regarding the discussion of the findings and the analysis, the researcher highlights in Chapter Five the similarities and differences in the mechanisms used in the two municipalities.

3.3 LIMITATIONS OF METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE LIMITATIONS

The sample composition posed a limitation due to the fact the participants were only supposed to be comprised of the general public, but at times the community leaders attended the focus groups which may have inhibited some of the respondents in expressing their views. In one of the towns, due to poor communication with the municipal leaders, only the community leaders were present to respond to the research questions which may have meant that the leaders were not as critical about the methods as other respondents might have been had they been the ones to attend. Another important limitation was that not all the participants had used or even heard about the ICT mechanism.

3.4 REFLEXIVITY

Reflexivity focuses on the fact the researcher needs to be aware of his or her feelings towards the study and even towards the participant (Vos et al., 2005). This study assumed that the citizens would have preferred the ICT system since increasingly the literature is supporting movement towards e-government participation. Based on the news reports assessed which gave a negative picture of proceedings in the two rural municipalities, it was concluded that public participation was not being conducted in a manner that aligns

with the principles of public participation. With that in mind, it was assumed that ward committees had no actual power and that ward councillors were failing to discharge their duties. According to Vos et al (2005) a researcher's personal assumptions have the potential to interfere with the analysis. However, using the skill of self-awareness, the researcher made sure not to put forward personal assumptions but rather the perceptions of the people. She achieved this by asking herself each time whether what she was writing was a direct reflection of what happened in the study and what the citizens had outlined as their perceptions. The researcher kept reminding herself of the objective of the study and accordingly focused on the observations obtained during the study. Further, due to the researcher's previous background in the field of social work, she reminded herself that the objective of the focus groups was not to facilitate a therapy session but to gather data and understand rather than fix their personal individual complaints. This was achieved by constantly referring to the set questions.

3.5 CONCLUSION SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter provided a detailed explanation as to why phenomenology was most ideal for achieving the purpose of the study. The chapter also set out the research design of the study and provided comprehensive information about the participants. In addition the chapter explored and specified the data analysis process and the limitations, and also spelt out the necessary ethical considerations. The table below is a summary of the methodology chapter.

TABLE 5 SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodology	Approach
Research Philosophy	Phenomenology
Research strategy	Case study
Research Purpose	Exploratory

Research Approach	Deductive
Target population	Local residents from Kou-Kamma and Ndlambe
Type of research	Mixed Research Study
Data collection techniques	Semi- structured interviews , focus groups and Likert scale
Data analysis	Quantitative analysis , thematic analysis and using Beierle’s evaluation framework using social goals (1998)

In conclusion, and as mentioned earlier, a mixed-methods approach was used to obtain the data to answer the research questions. Using a mixed approach enabled the researcher to obtain richer insights into the perceptions of participants. This approach is recommended when validating data (Venkatesh, Brown, and Bala, 2013). The qualitative data provided details of participants’ experiences whilst the quantitative data helped rate the extent to which the participants felt each mechanism achieved the stated public participation goals. Both sources of data not only helped to provide insights into the participants’ perceptions, but also provided the means for comparing the mechanisms and the findings in each town.

CHAPTER FOUR: STUDY SITE AND DESCRIPTION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter four first presents a description of the sites chosen for the case study, where they were located and why they were chosen. The description includes the demographics of the participants involved. Secondly, it highlights some of the service delivery and socio-economic challenges affecting the public participation process and mechanisms used, such as municipality constraints, low literacy and high unemployment.

The study focused on the two rural local municipalities Kou- Kamma and Ndlambe in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa (Figure 3). These two municipalities are located in Cacadu District Municipality (Figure 4). The municipalities were selected based on the rurality criteria assessment (view Table 6) as well as their willingness to participate. In the context of this study, the researcher was particularly interested in obtaining the perceptions of rural citizens' regarding the various participatory mechanisms, hence the use of rural areas.

According to the rural development framework of 1997, those areas defined as being rural must reflect the following two main characteristics. The first of the two characteristics is comprised of "*Sparsely populated areas in which people farm or depend on natural resources including villages and small towns that are dispersed through these areas*". The second characteristic is about "*areas that include large settlements in the former homelands, which depend on migratory labour and remittances as well as government grants for their survival and typically have traditional land tenure systems*" (Department of National Treasury, 201: 192). In South Africa settlement types are determined by features such as population density, number of female-headed households, dominant dwelling type and land use, including limited accessibility to resources such as water, sanitation, housings and education (Department of National Treasury, 2011). According to the Rural Development Framework of 1997 and the criteria developed by the National Treasury in South Africa (Table 6) the sites chosen are defined as rural areas as shown in Table 7. For a detailed

account of the process of choosing the sites, refer to the report titled k5/2114 under the Water Research Commission hub (WRC Knowledge Hub).

TABLE 6 CRITERIA TO DETERMINE RURALITY (*Department of National Treasury, 2011*)

Indicator	Definition
Population density	Number of households per square km
Female- headed households	Proportion of households headed by women
Education level	Proportion of population (20+) that has completed matric.
Rate of unemployment	Proportion of economically active population that is unemployed
Social grant dependency	Proportion of households depending on social grants
Dwelling type	Proportion of households classified as traditional
Water	Proportion of households without access to basic drinking water supply
Sanitation	Proportion of households without access to basic sanitation

TABLE 7 RURALITY CRITERIA PER SITE (*Rivett, et al., 2015*)

Indicator and Definition		Kou-Kamma Municipality	Ndlambe Municipality
Population density	Number of households per square km	3.1	10.5
Female-headed households	Proportion of households headed by women	31.2%	42%
Education level	Percentage of population that has completed matric		20.1%
Rate of unemployment	Proportion of economically active population that is unemployed	15%	30.3%
Social grant dependency	Proportion of population between ages of 15 and 64 depending on social grants	52.1%	54.3%
Dwelling type	Proportion of households classified as traditional	0.3%	3.8%
Water	Proportion of households without access to basic drinking water supply	35%	17%
Sanitation	Proportion of households without access to basic sanitation	20%	32%

Figure 3 presents the Eastern Cape Province, considered the second largest of the nine provinces in South Africa. It has an area of about 165 965.98 km² and an estimated population of 656, 2053 and people in 167, 385 households. The Eastern Cape is referred to as the poorest province in South Africa, and one with high levels of poverty. The majority of its population is made up of impoverished blacks, mainly female-headed households, characterised by income inequality, food insecurity and unemployment (Mcebisi, 2013). This province is in need of an effective way to improve public participation in order to improve service delivery, particularly with regard to access to water and sanitation.

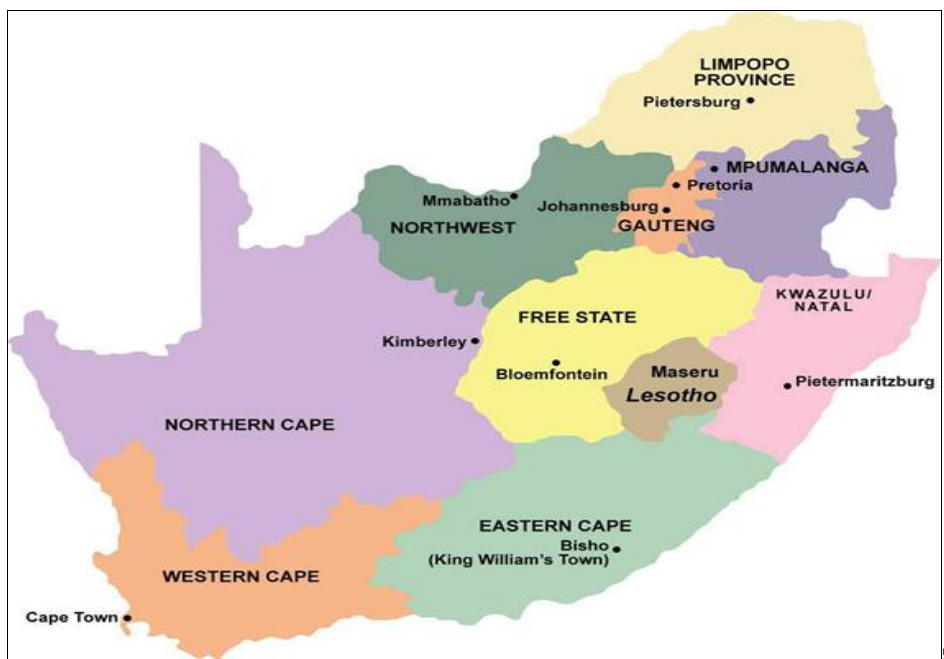


FIGURE 3 MAP OF THE NINE PROVINCES IN SOUTH AFRICA

4.2 CACADU DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY (View figure 4)

The study was carried out in the District of Cacadu in the Eastern Cape Province, a district that fits the criteria of a rural municipality. Cacadu is geographically the largest district in

⁵Source: Conference- South Africa Source, 2016. Available at: <http://www.conference-sa.co.za/conference-venues.htm> Accessed: 01 September 2016

the Eastern Cape as it covers 34 % of the province. According to a Local Government report of 2016, Cacadu is made up of 45 districts and covers an area of about 58 243.29km², with a population of 450 584(7.74 per km²). Cacadu District is larger than the whole of Switzerland, which is about 41285 km² (Wikipedia, 2017). This is a large responsibility for the Municipalities considering the already existing challenges of shortage of skilled staff and resources in South Africa's rural municipalities (Department of National Treasury, 2011).



FIGURE 4 CACADU DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

This study was limited to Ndlambe and Kou- Kamma, two local municipalities located in Cacadu District (Figure 4). Each Municipality indicated three towns that would be available to participate in the study.

⁶The local government handbook website, 2016. Available at: <http://www.localgovernment.co.za/districts/view/3/Sarah-Baartman-District-#> Accessed: 1 September 2016

The next two sections are overviews of the two local municipalities. It also expands on the socio- economic challenges that impact the public participation process

4.3 DESCRIPTION OF NDLAMBE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY INCLUDING ITS SOCIO – ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

The Ndlambe Local Municipality is largely a rural area whose economy is mainly based on agriculture and tourism (Statistics South Africa, 2016). This often means there is instability in the economy as it fluctuates according to the seasons and the influx of tourists. Secondly, most of the farm workers are immigrants, a factor which results in an inconsistent labour force (Statistics South Africa, 2016). This Municipality consists of six districts and has a population of 61 176. However, this study only focused on Bathurst, Alexandria and Port Alfred (Figure 4; Statistics South Africa, 2016). The majority of the population are females and seem to live longer compared to males (Figure 5). There is a high percentage (42, 6 percent) of female- headed households.

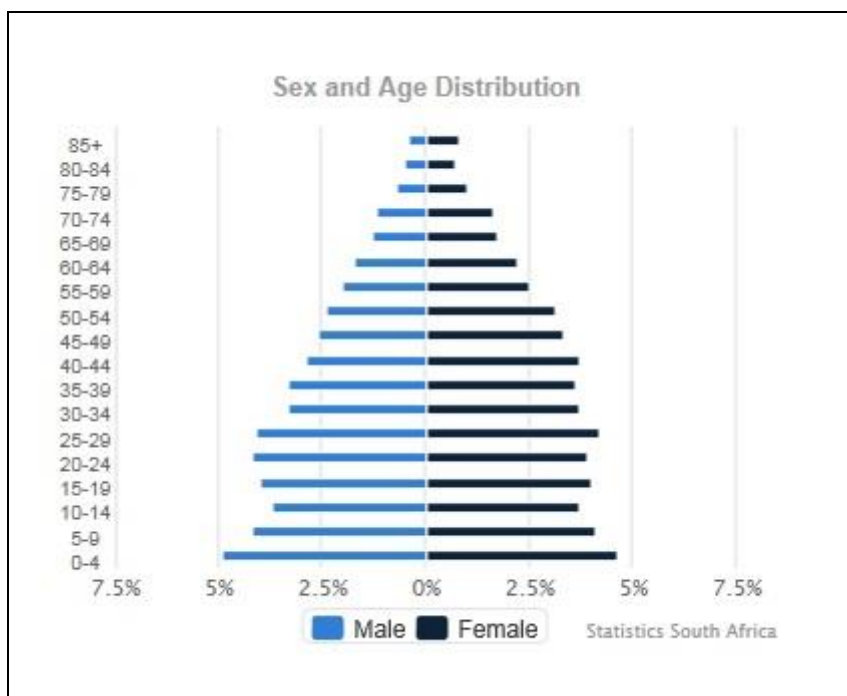


FIGURE 5 SEX AND AGE DISTRIBUTION IN NDLAMBE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY (Statistics South Africa, 2016)

Black Africans account for 77,7% of the population, while Whites only account for 14,2% of the population. The Coloured population is 7,3% of the whole while the Indian population accounts for 0,2% of the population of Ndlambe. The most predominant language is isiXhosa, followed by Afrikaans with English as the third dominant language (Statistics South Africa, 2016).

4.3.1 LOW EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN NDLAMBE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

As highlighted in FIGURE 6 below, there is a low attainment of higher education in this municipality (Statistics South Africa, 2016). As shown in figure 6 very few citizens have completed their education. Only 6,4% of those who are 20 years of age and older have completed primary school, while 33,5% have some level of secondary education, with only 20 % matriculating and a small percentage of 9,9 % has higher education(Statistics South Africa, 2016).

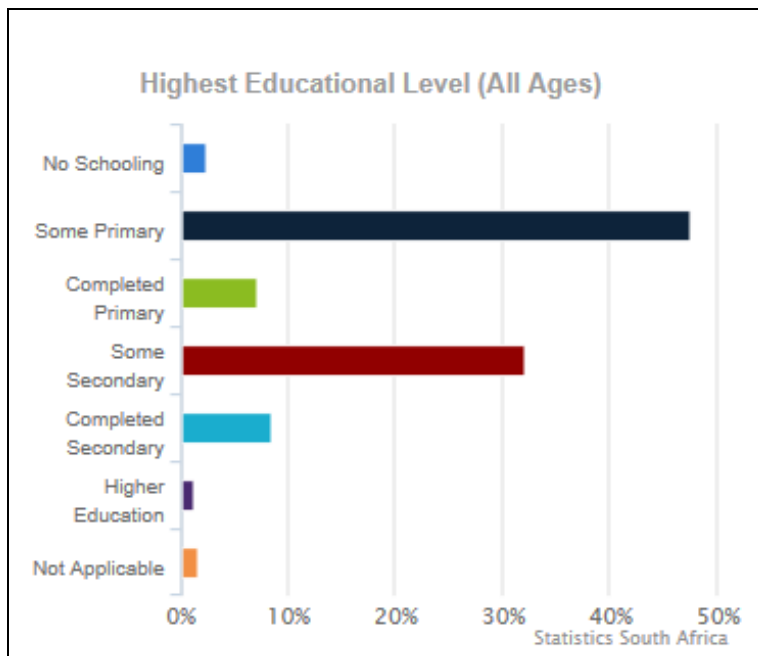


FIGURE 6 HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL LEVEL IN NDLAMBE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY (Statistics South Africa, 2016)

4.3.2 LOW EMPLOYMENT LEVELS IN NDLAMBE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Figure 7 shows employment is a challenge in the municipality. According to Statistics South Africa (2016) just over 5000 people aged 15-56 are unemployed and 15,000 people aged 15-34 are not economically active (not employed and not looking for work).

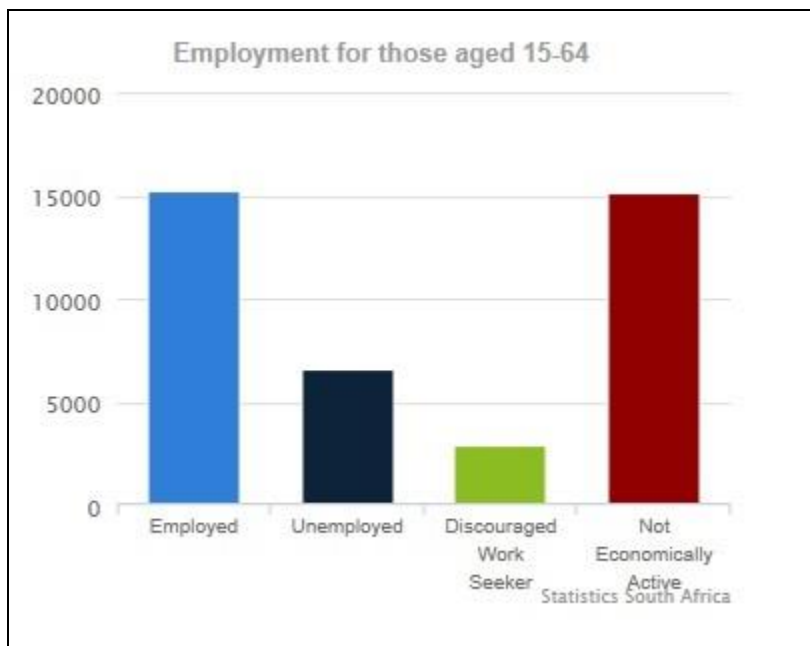


FIGURE 7 EMPLOYMENT FOR THOSE AGES 15-64 IN NDLAMBE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY (Statistics South Africa, 2016)

4.4 DESCRIPTION OF KOU-KAMMA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

Kou- Kamma Local Municipality has an estimated population of 40 663 people and covers an area of 35 575 km². For the most part, the ratios between females and males are quite similar (Statistics SA, 2016). According to Statistics SA on Kou- Kamma (2016) Coloureds are the most dominant group accounting for 59,8% of the population followed by Black Africans at 37%. Whites account for 8,2% and Indians / Asians for 0,3% of the population. Based on the racial demographics, Afrikaans is the most predominantly-spoken language at 74 %, followed by isiXhosa at 19,9% whilst only 2, and 5% of the population speak English as their first language (Statistics SA, 2016)

4.4.1 EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IN KOU-KAMMA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Figure 8 shows that 5.3% of those in the 20+ year age group had no schooling. This situation is similar to the one prevailing in the environment of Ndlambe Municipality, except that in this municipality much fewer people complete school or pursue higher education (Statistics SA, 2016). Only 10,3% of this age group completed primary school and of the 40,2% with some secondary education only 17% completed matric. A small percentage of 3,9% managed to obtain a certain level of higher education.

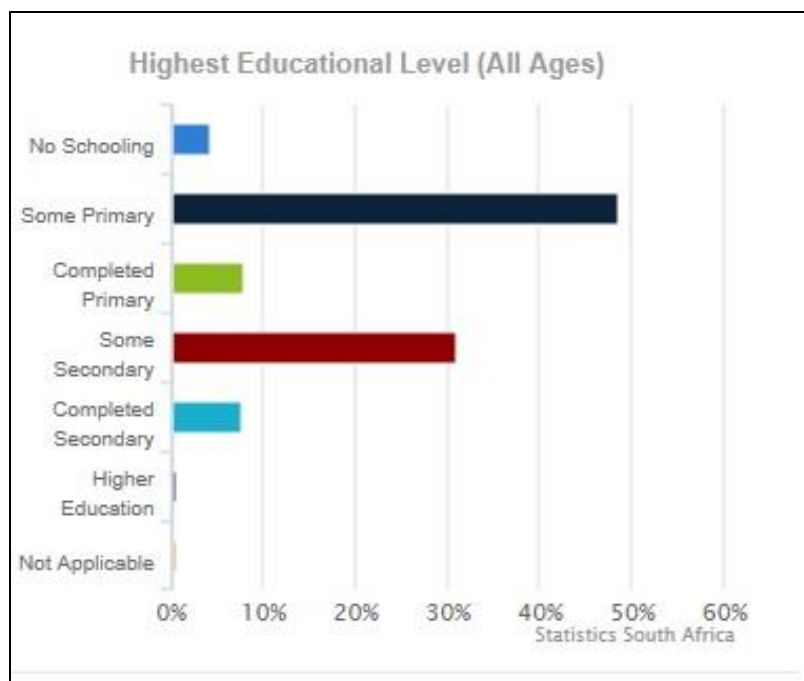


FIGURE 8 HIGHEST EDUCATION LEVEL IN KOU-KAMMA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY (Statistics SA, 2016)

4.4.2 EMPLOYMENT LEVELS IN KOU- KAMMA LOCAL MUNICIPLAITY

As seen in Figure 9, employment is still a challenge in Kou-Kamma. Out of the 14 931 people economically active (employed or unemployed but looking for work) 15, 0% are unemployed (Statistics SA, 2016). As with Ndlambe, Kou-Kamma is classified as an area suffering from low literacy levels with the result that job opportunities become limited (The Local Government Handbook of South Africa , 2016), hence the high unemployment levels.

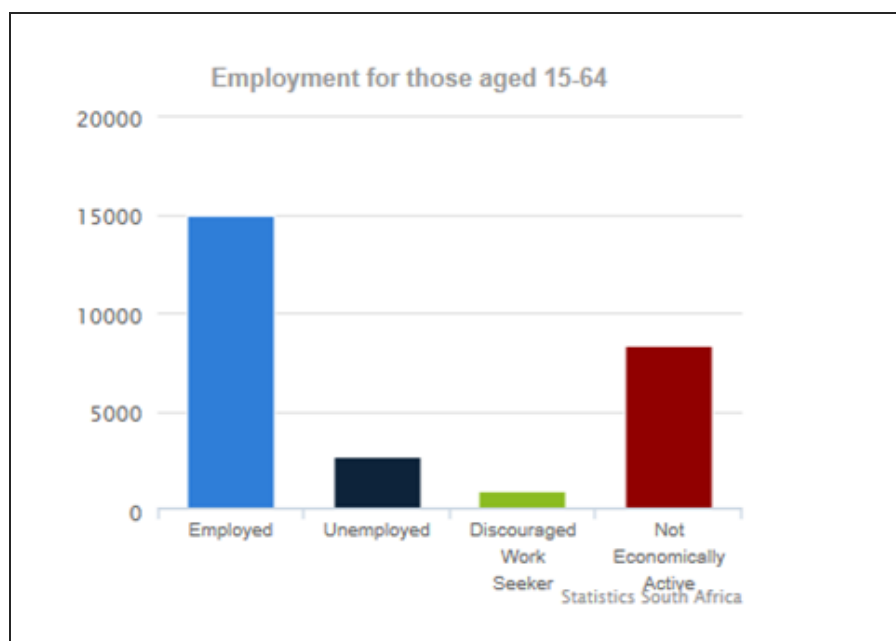


FIGURE 9 HIGHEST EMPLOYMENT LEVEL IN KOU-KAMA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY (Statistics South Africa, 2016)

4.5 THE EFFECTS OF INFRASTRUCTURAL CHALLENGES ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE TWO MUNICIPALITIES

This section presents the challenges faced by both local municipalities that possibly explain why public participation is not as effective as it should be. Although the municipality is committed to providing affordable water and adequate sanitation to all, many citizens are still unable to afford the subsidised services (Ndlambe Local Municipality, 2015). In addition, the settlements are often distant from each other, a factor that presents an infrastructural development challenge and strains the Municipality’s ability to provide basic services such as water, sewage, and sanitation (Kou-Kamma Local Municipality, 2012; The LGH of SA, n.d.). Another challenge is the lack of a sufficient and effective road infrastructure. This makes it difficult for the workers of the Municipality to reach

communities where maintenance is required (Ndlambe Local Municipality, 2015). Only 28% of households in Ndlambe have access to good roads. This possibly affects the mobility of community members when they wish to engage with municipality officers. There is therefore a need for the right modes of transportation (Cossio et al., 2012).

Besides the prevalence of socio-economic issues, Ndlambe and Kou-Kamma rural municipalities are overburdened with responsibilities and do not have the necessary capacity, compared to urban municipalities, to meet the needs of the people. Major inequalities with regard to access to portable water, infrastructure development and quality of water, particularly in the rural areas still exist (Rivett et al., 2015). It was noted in Ndlambe that although the Municipality prioritizes waste management and has developed projects to fulfill this duty, due to insufficient funds the municipality has not yet formulated an integrated waste management plan (Ndlambe Local Municipality, 2015). Furthermore, there is an acute imbalance in the reported ratio of service providers to Kou- Kamma citizens (2010-2011). About three supervisors administer water services, while nine operators, eight general workers and three supervisors manage the sanitation services for a population of 43 780 people in the jurisdiction of WSA. The technical and infrastructure team are clearly understaffed (Koukamma Municipality, 2011). Accordingly, there is a need for more qualified plumbers to handle the repairs and reticulation maintenance (Koukamma Municipality, 2011).

Working under these circumstances leaves many of the municipal workers unmotivated. At times they work over-time hours and yet still receive low wages and salaries (Ndlambe Local Municipality, 2015). Significant disparities between the directorate's incomes and those of the lower ranks in Kou-Kamma Municipality have led to worker-complaints (Statistics SA, 2016). Consequently, it has become necessary to introduce incentives and staff development programmes in order to increase motivation and create a healthy and stimulating work atmosphere (Ndlambe Local Municipality, 2015). Staff development and training programmes are likely to ensure that staff acquires the necessary skills training to

achieve the goals aligned with Government policies and developmental plans (Ndlambe Local Municipality, 2015). There is evidence that the lack of skilled or motivated staff has negative implications on public participation, given that this process requires knowledgeable and committed personnel to operate the participatory mechanisms and enhance public participation processes.

Regardless of the efforts exerted and the money invested in institutions to improve service delivery, providing adequate and efficient services is still posing a challenge, especially for the poor, rural and black population. There has been less improvement than expected in service delivery particularly in the rural areas. The current inadequate services, combined with the high unemployment and poverty levels, have led to regular protests in the townships (The World Bank, 2011).

In conclusion, the municipalities' objectives to provide effective service delivery has been crippled by underlying challenges in the form of unskilled staff, disproportional staff to service demands, non-conducive working conditions such as low salaries, poor infrastructure and insufficient funding. Considering the complexities around the current service delivery, it is near impossible to provide the resources needed for public participation. Public participation can be an expensive process considering the variety of mechanisms and skilled personnel required. In the findings, the researcher notes how the quality of staff affects the use of participatory mechanisms. The researcher also expands on how the literacy levels of citizens impact preference decisions with regard to participatory mechanisms. The researcher also underscores the necessity to understand the community and also considers the resources available when selecting mechanisms.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The preceding two chapters provided an overview of the research design and the methodology adopted for the study and site description. This chapter presents the findings of the study and provides an in-depth discussion.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study was on assessing the participatory mechanisms in the water and sanitation sector in South Africa's rural areas. The study had to show how the citizens' perceptions assist in identifying the mechanisms that may be most appropriate in the context of rural environments. The main question this study answered was the following:

What are the South African rural public's perceptions on whether the participatory mechanisms used in the water and sanitation sector achieve the intended goals of public participation?

To answer this main question, the following sub-questions were purposively asked.

1. What participatory mechanisms have rural citizens engaged with that are within the legal frameworks for public participation in South Africa?
2. What are the perceptions of rural South African citizens on participatory mechanisms?

The sections below present the findings, the discussion and analysis of the data collected. The first section 5.2 presents the mechanisms cited by the citizens as being used in each town per municipality. The second section 5.3 discusses the findings of the citizens' perceptions of the effectiveness of the participatory mechanisms in achieving the intended goals of public participation. The tables for each town are presented to illustrate the views prevalent in each town and execute a comparison between the two municipalities and towns provided. As part of the ethical requirements, the study was required to delink the findings from the name of the towns to protect the participants. The study therefore refers to the towns as Municipality A (town A1, A2, A3) and Municipality B (town B1, B2, B3). Section 5.4 brings the findings together and offers analyses across the six towns in order to

answer the research question. Section 5.5 is a general discussion of the findings of the study.

5.2 PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS RURAL CITIZENS ENGAGED WITH IN BOTH MUNICIPALITIES

The current study found that the local municipalities under scrutiny had assumed discretionary powers to determine which mechanisms are suitable for their municipality. This practice was and is in line with the recommendations made in the Public Service Commission (2008). Based on feedback from their citizens, Municipalities A and B adopted the use of various mechanisms such as public hearings/meetings, ward committees, focus groups, pamphlets, media platforms as well as modern technology methods such as the ICT tool which included SMSs. It was found that both these municipalities were adhering to the White Paper on Local Government of 1998 which stipulates that all local municipalities must implement participatory mechanisms to enable their citizens to engage in the public participation process (DPLG, 2007).

It is clear that the local municipalities had chosen to use the mechanisms recommended in the National Policy Framework 2007 (DPLG, 2007). However, there were differences even within the same municipality as to the number of mechanisms citizens had access to. This means that the citizens are not being provided equal opportunities to voice their views and engage with the municipal officials using a wider range of mechanisms. It was also found that none of the municipalities used citizen surveys, despite being recommended by the National Policy Framework 2007 as a useful means with which to obtain the citizens' views on service delivery (DPLG, 2007). The participants were therefore unable to comment on this mechanism since they had never engaged with it.

At this point is also important to mention that despite the citizens indicating their engagement with focus groups, their main experience of this mechanism was through independent bodies such as research groups including the ones conducted through this

study and not the municipality. This may have impacted their perception of the mechanism and is discussed in greater detail under section 5.4.

The tables presented below (Table 8 and 9) indicate which mechanisms the rural citizens noted as existing in each town per municipality. The section first presents towns in Municipality A and then towns in Municipality B. All the boxes ticked indicate which mechanisms the citizens were familiar with, whilst, the ones with a cross reflect the mechanisms not used in the town.

TABLE 8 PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS ENGAGED WITH IN MUNICIPALITY A

MUNICIPALITY A			
PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS	Town A1	Town A2	Town A3
Telephone interviews	X	X	X
Survey	X	X	X
Pamphlets	X	✓	✓
Loudhailer	✓	✓	✓
Newspaper/media	X	X	X
Public meeting/hearing	✓	✓	✓
Ward committee/ ward councillor	X	✓	✓
Focus group	✓	✓	✓
ICT system	✓	✓	✓

The participants in Town A1, had only engaged with four mechanisms, namely a loud hailer, focus groups, public meetings and ICT system to engage. Participants in Town A2 and A3 had exposure to pamphlets, loudhailers, public meeting/hearing, ward committee, focus groups and the ICT system. In neither of the towns had participants engaged with telephone interviews, surveys nor newspaper or media platforms. In comparison to other towns participants in Town A had the least exposure to a variety of mechanisms. The citizens stated that they did not know about a ward committee in their town, but said they

were still willing to make a few remarks about this mechanism. They also asserted that they did not have a relationship with ward committee as seen in following quotes:

“We do not even know if there is ward committee”

“We do not have a good relationship with our leaders and we do not see them”

The participants in Town A1 did not recognize the existence of public meetings as a mechanism for public participation in that town because they had only been used once. They went on to describe the mechanism as being ineffective and poorly-managed, in fact, participants even described themselves as being the least-informed community in their municipality.

TABLE 9 PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS ENGAGED WITH IN MUNICIPALITY B

MUNICIPALITY B			
PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS	Town B1	Town B2	Town B3
Telephone interviews	X	X	X
Survey	X	X	X
Pamphlets	✓	✓	✓
Loudhailer	✓	✓	✓
Newspaper/media	X	X	✓
Public meeting/hearing	✓	✓	✓
Ward committee/ ward councillor	✓	✓	✓
Focus group	✓	✓	✓
ICT system	✓	✓	✓

As for Municipality B, according to the citizens, they had engaged with pamphlets, loudhailers, public meetings /hearings, ward committees, focus groups and the ICT system. The only difference was that participants in Town B3 stated the existence of newspapers as an alternative means of engaging.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS FROM BOTH TOWNS FOR SUB QUESTION 1

The findings presented in Table 8 and 9 below reflect that for the most part both local municipalities are adhering to the Constitution of Republic of SA, 1996, Section 59, the Local Government: Municipal Structure Act 117 of 1998 and the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, which require that engagement platforms be set in place including ward committees (Republic of South Africa, 1996; Republic of South Africa, 2000). The only shortfall was in Town A1 which, according to the citizens, did not have an active ward committee which was even described as absent, a phenomenon which opposes the mandate of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000. These findings show that as mentioned by the Public Service Commission, although the concept of public participation is embraced, there are still challenges in ensuring total implementation of the policy requirements in all areas. This points out the weakness of Government and the poor leadership to ensure the accountability of all local municipalities as discussed by a number of authors (Brand South Africa, 2015; DPSA, 2014; Public Service Commission, 2008).

The absence of a ward committee in Town A1 may be one of the main reasons why its participants felt they were the most ill-informed community in the country. As stated by Rooyen & Mokoena (2013) ward committees bridge the gap between the citizens and the municipality. To do this they play a crucial role in the transference of information and knowledge from community to the municipality and vice versa. In addition, it was found that the towns in which participants engaged with ward committees, had the opportunity of engaging with more mechanisms than those that had no ward committee. Once again such findings highlight the importance of a ward committee in the public participation process as stipulated in the Municipal Structures and Systems Act (Republic of South Africa, 2000). The ward committees are tasked with the responsibility of not only representing the voice of the people to Government, but also to raise awareness of the various public methods and assist in operating or facilitating mechanisms such as loud hailer, public meetings/ hearings and distribution of pamphlets (Ababio, 2007; SALGA, 2016).

Overall the most used methods by municipalities identified were the loud hailer, public meetings and the ward committee. Of these, the loudhailer was the most dominant as shown by what is said by some of the respondents and outlined below:

The ward committee use the loudhailer the most to announce public meetings in area”
(respondent from Town A3)

“They drive around the area and with a loudhailer and the municipality also use the ward committee “(respondent from Town A2)

“We usually engage with the ward councillor or they usually use public meetings”
(respondent from Town B1)

Given the sentiments expressed by some of the participants as shown in the words of the cited respondents from Towns B1, A2 and A3 and according to the findings of this study, being the most dominant does not necessarily translate to being the most preferred or effective participatory mechanism (Barker et al., 2005). This matter is analysed in greater detail in Section 5.3 and Section 5.4 where there is a discussion on how participants perceive the mechanisms.

The data captured in Table 8 and Table 9 show that telephone interviews and surveys were not used in the municipalities of Town A2, Town B2 and Town B3 as shown below:

Sorry we have not had telephonic interviews or surveys” (respondent from Town B2)

“We have never filled surveys “(respondent from Town A2)

“We do not know of these mechanisms we often use public meetings and loudhailer”
(respondent from Town B3)

The profile of the participants presented in Chapter Three and the data from Statistics South Africa for each municipality presented in Chapter Four further corroborate the findings of this study on the impact of illiteracy on public participation processes. Accordingly, public participation through mechanisms such as the telephone, the survey, and the newspaper proved to be inappropriate. This was largely because of the high

illiteracy levels in these communities as indicated in quotes from some of the participants which are given below:

“It is not a good idea because some people can’t read and this creates big problems”
(respondent from Town B2)

“No newspaper, because people find it easier to listen to radio” (respondent from Town A1)

According to Statistics SA (2016) as shown in Figure 6 and Figure 8 in Chapter Four, the citizens of Ndlambe and Kou- Kamma had low attainment levels in the area of higher education. Thus, only 6.4 % of those aged 20 years and above had completed primary school in Ndlambe, and only 10.3 % of same age group had done the same in Kou- Kamma (Statistics SA, 2016; Statistics South Africa, 2016).

It was also found that due to infrastructural challenges such as the lack of a postal service that reaches the rural areas and also because of the poor road infrastructure, access to the newspaper proved impossible (See the submissions below).

“Radio is better than newspaper because everyone can access it, there no efficient postal service that reached these rural areas” (respondent from Towns B3)

“Newspapers tend to stop in the main towns and do not reach our areas because of the roads it is not the best way to engage” (respondent from Town A2).

Besides the high illiteracy levels and the infrastructure challenges, for most rural citizens it would not be financially feasible to buy a newspaper. The high unemployment rate of citizens in both communities (See Figure 7 showing the employment rate in Ndlambe and Figure 9 showing the employment rate in Kou- Kamma) corroborates the finding on newspaper access. As observed in the findings, though newspapers were available in municipality A, none of the participants had actually purchased the newspaper.

This section has successfully identified the mechanisms noted by participants to be in use in each town. The next section goes a step further to evaluate if the mechanisms being used are perceived to be promoting the intended goals of public participation as stated in

policy(Constitution of South Africa 1996, White Paper on Local Government 1998, Public participation framework 2007 and The Batho Pele principles) as discussed in Chapter Two.

5.3 THE EXTENT TO WHICH RURAL CITIZEN'S PERCEIVE PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS AS PROMOTING THE GOALS/OUTCOMES OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Tables 10-15 below depict a wide range of the perspectives derived from the views of the citizens in each town. The views are a reflection on whether or not each mechanism achieved the intended outcomes of participation as stipulated in the Beierle (1998) Evaluation Framework presented in chapter three.

The outcomes were summarised into six goals as presented below:

- Goal 1: the public feel educated and informed
- Goal 2: public values are considered and incorporated
- Goal 3: substantive quality which refers to citizens contributing to solutions,
- Goal 4: that trust is built
- Goal 5: that conflict is reduced
- Goal 6: that the use of that mechanism was cost -effective

The participants from each town had different perspectives on each mechanism with the result that an overwhelming amount of data was produced. As a means for organizing the data, the researcher formulated the findings tables presented in this section. The tables present the views of the majority of participants interviewed in each town. The methodology discussion in Chapter Three describes in detail how the views of the majority were obtained. Not only does this section present the views held for each mechanism per town, but it also reveals which mechanisms were considered the most effective.

In order to determine the most preferred mechanisms overall, it was necessary to ascertain how many goals, in the view of the participants, each mechanism had achieved or at least

was perceived as having the potential of achieving. The mechanisms were ranked according to how many goals each mechanism was able to achieve in comparison to other mechanisms. This helped the researcher identify the mechanisms perceived as being the most effective in attaining the goals and being the more likely to encourage participation in each town and overall

5.3.1 FINDINGS IN MUNICIPALITY A

TABLE 10 FINDINGS TABLE OF TOWN A1

TOWN A1							
	Goal 1		Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6
Mechanisms	Education	Information	Public values	Substantive quality	Trust	Reduced Conflict	Cost effectiveness
Non-deliberative participatory mechanisms							
Loudhailer	1	1	3	3	3	3	3
Deliberative participatory mechanisms							
Focus Groups	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
Alternative mobile ICT mechanism							
ICT tool	3	3	1	3	3	2	2
Key	1 Applicable (achieved the goal) 2 Possibly applicable (unsure) 3 Not applicable (goal not achieved)						

As shown in Table 10 focus groups were considered the most ideal for this community because the participants viewed themselves as being quite well-educated and informed

(Goal 1) about the future plans of the municipality. The participants learned alternative new ways of reporting faults. The participants gained valuable information that could be useful in bringing change improving current service delivery and solving the existing communication problems as reflected in quotes:

“We were informed about the next development plans for the municipality”

“When had opportunity to learn about the new ICT tool that was being designed to improve ways we can report faults and get feedback?”?

In addition, although, each mechanism managed to promote at least one goal, it became clear that focus groups had a higher chance of effectively achieving all the other goals, in particular, Goal 4 (Trust) and Goal 2 (Incorporating public values). Compared to other mechanisms, focus groups had the advantage of being able to provide space in which citizens could have a voice and express their views and concerns as well as obtain feedback matters raised. The views of some of the respondents on the question of the focus group mechanism are presented below:

“Focus groups could possibly achieve all the other goals, we haven’t used them much but I really liked it “

“Well I do not know this mechanism well, we only engaged with it once but I believe it can build trust” (Goal 4)

“If planned well it could be a space we can discuss our employment, toilet and water supply problems and have a good relationship”

“At least this method would give us chance to get feedback and present our ideas” (goal 2 public values and Goal 3)

The quotes on focus groups were seen as a tool that could rebuild confidence in the ability of the institution to bring change and foster trust by assuring the citizens that their views would be taken into consideration in the decision-making. In comparison, the loud hailer was considered the least effective. Regardless of the fact that the citizens were informed

(Goal 1) through the loudhailer, participants were not satisfied with the level of information being shared. The loudhailer could only be used to provide information pertaining to meetings. The participants also did not feel that loudhailers provided space to have their queries answered. Neither did it provide them adequate feedback on matters previously raised. As a result this jeopardized the citizen's confidence and trust in the efficiency of the municipality to deliver. Thus for the citizens, the loudhailer did not achieve Goal 4 since it did not promote trust in the institution. The quotes below illustrate this point.

"We are updated when there is a public meeting",

"They sometimes let us know when there is no water in area using the loudhailer but we are not told when the problem will be fixed"

"How are we supposed to trust when things are never clear and we are least informed community?"

Furthermore the loudhailer, unlike the focus groups, was perceived as only promoting a one –way communication flow from the government to the citizens. For that reason, the loudhailer did not provide opportunities for participants to have a voice or a chance to address conflict. Accordingly, the loudhailer did not promote Goal 2 (incorporate public values), Goal 3 (substantive quality) and Goal 5 (reduce conflict) as demonstrated by the submissions below:

"They tell us when to meet but do not give us feedback on our concerns, communication only goes one way."

"They only let us know there are IDP meetings or when there is a burst pipe but nothing more."

The loudhailer was also not considered the most effective mechanism in passing information because announcements were made at inconvenient times during working hours. A further weakness concerning the use of the loudhailer was that the leaders failed to ensure that notices were systemically publicized in every area:

“Not everyone hears the announcements because they will be at work.”

“At times, they do not drive around all the areas with the loudhailer.”

Although participants rated the ICT tool higher than the loudhailer, it was still not considered the most ideal mechanism for use in public participation mainly because the citizens doubted the ability of the mechanism to actually bring about change. The lack of trust by the citizens stems from a pre-existing mistrust in the reliability of the municipality to attend to their problems. Participants were also dissatisfied with delayed response times as reflected in following responses:

“I did not use the system so I cannot judge if I can trust it.”

“I had to call three to four times to follow up on the problem; they did not even explain the reason for the delay.”

“It was only when the problem was critical according to the municipality then they respond quicker.”

The participants also discredited the ICT tool because it was also not perceived as a mechanism that assists in educating the citizens. In addition, its lack of appeal was made worse by its exclusion of the elderly in the community as shown below:

“We were not educated by the system.”

“The phones can be a challenge for the elderly who do not use them often.”

Despite the majority not using the ICT system, they did acknowledge that if it had been used it would probably be a cost –effective mechanism. It was also described as having the capacity to reduce conflict mainly because it provides an avenue for feedback at no cost to citizens:

“If we had used it probably would save me the cost to all or travel to municipality.”

While public meetings had been identified as an existing mechanism in the town (Refer to Table 8), they were not popular in this town. The participants did not feel familiar enough

with this mechanism to evaluate if it promoted the intended goals of public participation. According to the participants, public meetings were, on average, used only once a year and when they were used they were considered inefficient. The quotes below illustrate this assessment of public meetings as a mechanism for effecting public participation in decision-making.

“They only happen once a year and they are not conducted well”

“Even when they do they have meetings they are not well structured and we do not get feedback on issues we would have presented to them”

TABLE 11 FINDINGS TABLES FOR TOWN A2

TOWN A2							
	Goal 1		Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6
Mechanisms	Education	Information	Public values	Substantive quality	Trust	Reduced Conflict	Cost effectiveness
Non-deliberative participatory mechanisms							
Loud hailer	1	1	3	3	1	3	1
Pamphlets	1	1	3	3	2	3	1
Deliberative participatory mechanisms							
Public hearing/ meeting	1	1	2	1	1	2	1
Advisory /ward committee/ ward councillor	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Focus group	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
Alternative mobile ICT mechanism							
ICT tool	1	1	1	1	1	2	3
key	1 Applicable (achieved goal) 2 Possibly applicable (unsure if goal achieved) 3 Not applicable (goal not achieved)						

As presented in Table 11, ward committees were ranked the most effective mechanism in Town A2. The ward committee was perceived as promoting all of the six intended outcomes/goals of public participation. According to the participants, ward committees incorporated the views of the public (Goal 2) and also promoted substantive quality (Goal 3) by providing citizens the opportunity to share local knowledge with them and through them with the municipality. In addition, citizens could also suggest solutions to given problems. The citizens felt heard and respected since the municipality took time to listen to citizens:

“The committee gives us a chance to present our concerns and what we would like to see changed.”

“Yes, they definitely listen to our suggestions and take into consideration the information we share in the meetings.”

The quality of relationship citizens had with the ward committee impacted on how they perceived this mechanism. For that reason, the quality of relationship affected the willingness of citizens to engage willingly with the committee. It was also found that the participants had a good relationship with the ward committee and councillor, and therefore, they perceived the ward committee and the councillor as being quite efficient at their job also in terms of sharing relevant information. The information so-shared kept the citizens informed and educated (Goal 1):

“He is every active in our town and we can easily approach him.”

“We have a good relationship with the ward councillor, and the committee tends to communicate when meetings are, we can discuss our water and sanitation challenges.”

“The committee members inform us of projects in the area and let us know of opportunities we can be involved.”

The ward committee members in this town were considered trustworthy and reliable due to their level of efficiency and to their being noticeably proactive. This helped in building trust in the capacity of the ward committee as a structure and also building trust in the public participation process:

“They are reliable and we trust them because when we raise concerns they do something about it, which helps us to also trust the public participation process.”

“They give us feedback even though they do not always have the solution to the topic.”

Based on the quotes above it was evident that participants were more willing to engage where there is trust in the reliability of ward committee.

Ward committees were also considered ideal because they were cost – effective, particularly with regard to being easily accessible at limited or no cost at all as shown below:

“Most the committee members live near us and we can just walk to them and find them.”

“The ward councillor has a phone that we can use to reach him at any time before six.”

Limited costs to citizens would be important to the citizens considering the economic challenges facing the citizens in these municipalities as discussed in the site description in Chapter Four (Cossio et al., 2012; The Local Government Handbook, 2016).

Although focus groups were not the most used mechanism in Town A2, the focus group was adjudged to be the second highest mechanism in achieving most of the goals. Focus groups, like ward committees, were also perceived as a mechanism that allows citizens to be educated and informed (Goal 1).

“Through the focus groups discussions, we were educated on the new ICT system and how to use it step by step.”

“Often in the focus groups we would be told what new plans for community and what would be expected of us.”

Focus groups were also identified as a mechanism that incorporates public values/preferences (Goal 2) and promotes substantive quality (Goal 3). The participants found the process of engaging in public participation valuable as it gave them some responsibility and created a sense of community as shown by the quotes below:

“We get the chance to talk about our issues and concerns amongst each other and hear different views.”

“I get to contribute which I do not always get to do in public meetings because there too many people.”

“I like focus groups because I get to contribute alternative ideas and provide useful information; they ask us what we think.”

The participants also felt that the use of focus groups builds trust (Goal 4) in the ability of the agency facilitating the focus group and were empowering. This was because focus groups gave the participants access to knowledge through feedback and also played a role in building trust in the ability of leaders:

“I definitely feel like using this method builds trust because we get to engage with leaders and each other, we express our views and together come up with solutions.”

“Trust is built because they give us feedback and they make us aware of what is happening with new projects and what we feel about it.”

Although the participants were unsure if this mechanism reduced conflict (Goal 5) they did feel it had the potential if more frequently used. Overall, the focus groups were perceived as being cost effective (Goal 6) because they achieved a lot in those meetings and because the meetings were held at convenient times. Clearly, in this town it was important that

meetings be held at convenient times as this had an impact on the numbers attending and their perception of the value in engaging.

“Yes, I think focus groups are cost- effective, we achieve a lot on those meetings.”

“At times, they can be long but I still think they are cost effective since the meetings are held at convenient times and they make us feel valued.”

Although both public meetings and the ICT system were rated as promoting four out of the six goals, the citizens preferred public meetings/hearings over the ICT. According to the participants, public meetings/hearings provide a platform where they are educated and informed (Goal 1) and furthermore, the public meetings/hearings give the participants space to present their suggestions on how to improve upon the issues in their community. Two of the respondents had this to say:

“I prefer public meetings because not only do they inform us of current challenges the municipality is having, but they give us space to suggest how to address some of the shortfalls such as hiring more trucks so they can drive out sooner to fix our water and sanitation faults.”

“I like the fact we get to express our views and get our questions answered in the meetings.”

Access to information and being provided space to be heard were the contributing factors that made participants feel that this mechanism increased trust in the ability and integrity of government officials (Goal 4). In addition, they appreciated the fact that they could speak directly face to face to the municipal leaders and get feedback such as that given below:

“We appreciate public meetings because we can see the leaders and talk directly to them about the concerns we have which helps increase trust between us.”

Table 11 shows that the majority of participants also perceived this mechanism as cost – effective (Goal 6):

“Public meetings tend to be held in areas central to us so we don’t have to travel far”

It was not conclusive whether public meetings incorporate the public's values, preferences and assumptions (Goal2) and whether they reduce conflict (Goal 5). As shown below, most people chose to say they were unsure:

"Well I am not sure if they always incorporate our view into the decision-making process, I do think they give us a chance to express it but not sure whether it can make an impact"

"Umm I guess it could reduce conflict if there were any differences."

Participants in this town were of the view that ICT tools, like the ward committees and focus groups, were quite effective in promoting the first four goals of public participation. The general feeling from participants who had used the system was that the ICT tool implemented had made a positive difference in various ways including change in attitude and the engendering of trust in the ability of the municipality to improve things.

"Communication with the municipality improved and the fact that we were receiving feedback via text with reference number helped build trust."

Participants felt educated and informed (Goal 1) through the ICT and felt that the design of the ICT tool had incorporated public values, preferences for a low cost engagement mechanism, the need for feedback and better communication channels. This led to the promotion of Goal 2. The participants also indicated that the ICT tool allowed for substantive quality (Goal 3) although they did not elaborate why:

"You know I learnt a lot from using the ICT tool and I liked the fact that the team that designed it had taken our views and concerns for a cheaper way to report faults."

"As a community, we were informed of new ways to use technology report our faults and it was fast."

In addition, citizens who had used the system felt that if the efficiency of the system was improved it could possibly be used to reduce conflict (Goal 5). In terms of the assessment of the participants, there was no consensus on whether the ICT tool could reduce conflict or not since only those who had used the mechanism felt it could, whilst those who had not

done so were doubtful. The doubt stemmed from the fact that in the past the municipality had failed to provide feedback to some citizens. These sentiments were expressed as follows:

“I personally liked it, they just need to make sure they efficiently respond back to everyone’s concerns in the given time and consistently provide updates then it’s probably guaranteed to reduce conflict.”

“I do not think it can reduce conflict because it is not guaranteed that people will get feedback on their problem.”

“Well I think this mechanism can reduce conflict, it changed people’s attitude towards the municipality because they finally felt like something was being done about the problem.”

Although there was appreciation for the ICT tool, citizens still preferred the more traditional methods of providing for public participation and in particular, there was a preference for the ward committee. This was mainly for two reasons; firstly being that the ICT tool excluded the illiterate elderly who are not well-versed in technology. Secondly, traditional mechanisms respected the cultural value participants had for face to face interaction as depicted below:

“The elderly illiterate members in community rarely use phones or read pamphlets so it would not be the best mechanism; they would rather see the leaders face to face”

“Even though the ICT tool seems very useful, we did not use it much because we are used to easily contacting the ward committee members and the municipality directly,”

“Well we hardly used the ICT though it is good idea because we people often go to the clinic every Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and there is a satellite office located right next door which gives us a chance to report water and sanitation faults in person.”

Participants also added that although the ICT tool seemed like a useful mechanism, there was still a need to improve its efficiency.

"I did receive a call back after sending a please call and reference number but they did not follow up to tell me why they were not able to fix the problem or why there was a delay."

As for pamphlets and the loud hailer, based on the citizens' ratings they were the lowest rated mechanisms when examining the achievement of the goals. However, at an individual level, participants in Town A2 spoke highly of the loudhailer despite it not achieving most of the goals. It is one of the most used mechanisms and was perceived as enabling citizens to be educated and informed (Goal 1).

"We find the loudhailer seems to reach everyone and serves as a platform to communicate meeting dates."

Although the loudhailer did not incorporate public values (Goal 2) nor encourage substantive quality (Goal 3), the participants felt that it built trust in the ability of the local municipal structure (Goal 4). Trust was built because the loudhailer was reliable at keeping participants informed. The need to be informed was a valuable principle with regard to the members of this community. Some of the participants put it as follows:

"I feel the loudhailer keeps us updated of when there are meetings or water cuts."

"Even our elderly can hear what is going on as they drive around to all areas unlike pamphlets or newspapers which they can't read"

"It is very respectful when they at least let us know what is happening and means they want us to be part of it."

Participants from Town A2 also perceived the loudhailer as a cost- effective mechanism (Goal 6) because it was mobile and announcements were made in languages they understood:

"Yes, I strongly agree that it is cost effective because the information comes to us and we do not have to go anywhere."

"I agree because I like the fact that we can understand the announcements, they make them in English and Xhosa."

While the participants from Town A2 liked the loudhailer, it failed to reduce conflict (Goal 5). According to the participants, this was mainly due to the absence of a two-way mode of communication in which citizens could communicate with the municipality. The prevailing situation was that communication only flowed from the municipality to the citizens, which is one of the leading reasons why it did not reduce conflict:

“The disadvantage with this method though is that it does not give us a chance to discuss with the municipality and bring up our problems.”

“We do not get to share our views or negotiate our frustrations.”

Based on the citizen's ratings on the questionnaire, pamphlets were the least favoured in this town. The pamphlets were perceived to only promote two goals Goal 1 (educate and inform) and Goal 6 (cost – effectiveness):

“Pamphlets were good at educating us on how to use the ICT tool, the five steps were clear.”

“I liked the fact that the pamphlets were in all three languages, it helped to inform us how we could rather reach the municipality.”

“I strongly agree that it is cost-effective because notices were distributed and now we can easily access information without being in long meetings.”

The biggest criticism of the pamphlet was that it excluded illiterate members of the community and that it was not well-distributed. Matters of exclusion go against the key principles of public participation as stipulated in the National Policy Framework for Public Participation (DPLG, 2007). The participants also expressed their preference for mechanisms that allowed for face to face interaction as follows:

“My problem with pamphlets is that not everyone can read and most people rather talk face to face and hear information directly from community leaders.”

“The elderly illiterate members in community rarely use phones or read pamphlets so it would not be best mechanism; they would rather see the leaders face to face.”

Despite some apparent differences in assessment, there were a few similarities including that the participants felt that all the mechanisms in Town A2 were useful in educating and informing citizens. Ward committees, focus groups and the ICT tool achieved Goal 2 (incorporating the public values, preferences in decision- making). The ICT tool, focus groups, ward committees, public hearings and loudhailer all helped establish trust with citizens. Focus groups, advisory committees (ward committee), public hearings/meetings and pamphlets were also considered cost – effective.

TABLE 12 FINDINGS TABLE FOR TOWN A3

TOWN A3							
	Goal 1		Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6
Mechanisms	Education	Information	Public values	Substantive quality	Trust	Reduced Conflict	Cost effectiveness
Non-deliberative participatory mechanisms							
Loud hailer	1	1	3	3	3	3	1
Pamphlets	1	1	1	1	2	2	1
Newspaper							
Deliberative participatory mechanisms							
Public hearing/ meeting	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Advisory /ward committee/ ward councillor	1	1	2	2	1	1	1
Focus group	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Alternative mobile ICT mechanism							
ICT tool	3	3	1	3	3	2	1
key	1 Applicable (achieved goal) 2 Possibly applicable (unsure if goal was achieved) 3 Not applicable (goal not achieved)						

In contrast to participants from the other two towns in Municipality A participants in Town A3 favoured public meetings/hearings most. In fact, they perceived public meetings as one of the most effective mechanisms for achieving the public participation goals and keeping the citizens informed of any meetings as well as new interventions or plans, therefore promoting Goal 1. It was found that the constant provision of relevant information helped to build the citizens' trust in the reliability of the municipality; hence they rated the mechanism as achieving Goal 4 (Building trust). It is clear to see that keeping citizens informed is valuable to the public participation process as it builds the relationship between the two.

"The fact that they keep us updated makes us feel like they value us, so it builds trust."

"We tend to get updated about the IDP future to improve the services in our areas."

Another reason why trust was built was because, according to the participants, this mechanism provided a platform where public views and preferences are incorporated (Goal 2). In addition, the participants also perceived it as a mechanism that promotes substantive quality (Goal 3).

"You see, I chose strongly agree because during the public meetings we get to raise our concerns and ask questions we need answered."

"At times the municipal leaders even ask us to say our suggestions and input into the decisions."

Public meetings were also perceived as being useful in reducing conflict (Goal 5) between the municipality and citizens mainly because it provides dialogue between the two entities and that gives them opportunity to iron out matters.

“What I enjoy about public meetings unlike other mechanisms is that we get to debate issues and talk about our worries like employment issues and delay in fixing the water pipes.”

“At least we get to talk to the municipal leaders and ward councillor directly until we agree on something.”

Despite the participants not being so familiar with focus groups they still ranked them the second most effective mechanism in achieving most of the goals of public participation. The participants felt that focus groups provided a platform for in-depth discussions about their needs, new development initiatives or service delivery challenges. Most participants concluded that this mechanism allowed them to be educated and informed (Goal 1), incorporate the public’s values (Goal 2) and allows for substantive quality (Goal 3):

“In these focus group discussions, we say our views about the topic and the municipal leaders try explain to us what they trying to do or what challenges they are having.”

“We learn a lot in those discussions especially about new projects in place to help improve service delivery.”

“The focus groups are informative; we get information on when it’s time for voting for new leaders.”

Focus groups were also perceived as a mechanism that builds trust in the public participation process to yield results and reduce conflict, thereby promoting Goals 4 and 5.

“Yeah ... I like the fact that we get to talk engage with leaders and with each other to hear different views it helps us trust each other and we iron out our issues.”

“We may not always agree but at least the focus group discussions help us reduce conflict.”

Focus groups were also viewed as a cost effective (Goal 6):

“I think it is an effective method, though it needs to be coordinated well. I find it cost effective.”

Although the ward committee did not achieve all the six goals, the participants still spoke highly of it in comparison to participants in Municipality B. It was amongst the top three most favoured mechanisms in the town. This was because a majority of the participants from Town A3 considered ward committees an effective mechanism in helping to inform and educate the public (Goal 1). Furthermore, according to the citizens, the combination of access to information being shared and also having the chance to interact directly with leaders helped in building trust in the reliability of the government (Goal 4) and helped to reduce conflict (Goal 5) as expressed below:

“We definitely feel our leaders keep us informed and we know what is going on which really helps us trust them more.”

“You know, I like our ward committee because they are easily accessible, we get to talk to them directly and they are friendly. In fact we tend to talk about things we do not agree on and try solve them.”

“We currently don’t have major issues with the ward committee and when conflict comes we tend to discuss it, generally we trust them even though there is room for improvement.”

Despite the positive remarks from the participants it was inconclusive whether or not the ward committee in Town A3 incorporates public value in their decisions (Goal 2) and whether they promote substantive quality (Goal 3) or not.

“At times they give us a chance to contribute to solving the problem but I wouldn’t say I strongly agree neither would I say I disagree. I do think it has the possibility of achieving these two goals but the leaders need to ask us.”

Even without achieving these two goals the participants still considered ward committees cost effective (Goal 6) mainly because they value personal interaction and the ease of access ward committees guaranteed. Thus, they felt that communication was effective and informative.

“Yes, I strongly agree that the ward committee is cost effective, we can easily access them and they keep us informed.”

“The ward committee is not perfect, it often depends on the leader and ward councillor, but in general I still consider it cost effective.”

As for the pamphlets, participants from Town A3 held a greater appreciation of them in comparison to the other participants from Municipality A. In fact, in this town pamphlets alongside ward committees were rated among the top three most effective mechanisms in promoting the goals. Participants considered them quite helpful in informing and educating the public (Goal 1), especially because the pamphlets were written in a language they understood. In addition, while pamphlets are a mechanism that only serves to inform, the citizens felt that their views, suggestions, values and preferences had been taken into consideration in the design of the pamphlets, thereby achieving Goal 2 (public values) and Goal 3 (substantive quality).

“The pamphlets were very helpful in informing us on how to use the new ICT tool, the steps were very clear.”

“The fact that the pamphlets were in a language that accommodated everyone and were well explained made us feel that they had really taken our previous concerns into consideration for feedback and information.”

“The fact that they were introducing pamphlets and a new system showed they listened to our suggestions for better communication and more affordable ways to report faults.”

Pamphlets were also perceived to be a cost effective mechanism mainly because there are no financial implications or time implications for the citizens. In addition, participants felt that pamphlets kept those who would have missed the public meetings and loudhailer announcements informed.

“For those of us who can read it is more convenient to just get pamphlets with announcements than attending every public meeting.”

“It is easier for me to keep updated than when I get back to work is I could have a pamphlet with all relevant information.”?

There was also evidence however, that pamphlets did not help in building trust (Goal 4) and neither did they reduce conflict (Goal 5). This was mainly because this mechanism had not often been used by the municipality and because it did not provide a platform to discuss matters. It was, therefore, not considered a mechanism that could operate independently.

“Even though the pamphlets are useful to keep us informed, it’s too soon to tell if they help to build trust or whether they reduce conflict.”

“We are not used to this mechanism, so it’s hard for me to trust that it will really make a difference to the public participant process.”

The ICT tool and loudhailer in comparison to the other mechanisms were perceived as the two least-effective mechanisms in achieving the six goals of public participation. Both mechanisms only managed to promote two goals. The participants did not think highly of these two mechanisms.

“We have no voice with the loudhailer and they do not always reach all the areas making announcements

“The ICT tool is not reliable it does not really promote two way communication”

The loudhailer was not perceived as a mechanism that incorporated the public’s values (Goal2). Furthermore, it was not seen to value local knowledge (Goal 3), and did not build trust (Goal 4) or reduce conflict (Goal 5). Neither was the ICT tool perceived as a method that promotes two way communication as intended.

Participants from this town did not consider that the ICT tool informs or educates (Goal 1) nor did they think it promoted substantive quality (Goal 3), or that it built trust (Goal 4). This was mainly because many of the participants were not familiar with the new mechanism and also because they did not think the new mechanism would change the pre-

existing dissatisfaction with the service delivery of municipality. The other obstacle was that it excluded illiterate elderly people as well.

“You know I disagree because I don’t really think this ICT could bring trust because the municipality has already let us down, they did not always call us back when we sent a please call, even when they did they still took so long to attend to the problem.”

“Not many of us used it because we did know about it, we are used to using the other mechanisms.”

“My main problem with the ICT tool is that even though we get to say our concerns and report them, it’s only those who can easily use phones who can use it, our elderly needed time it’s not really something they would like to use as they would need assistance.”

Despite the criticism that the loudhailer and the ICT tool were both considered - effective in terms of time and finances. Both mechanisms did not cost the citizens anything despite them not being the most cost-effective (Goal 6).

“The thing I like about the ICT tool is just how easy it is to send a please call without needing to use airtime, I know someone who used it and said they came quickly to fix the burst pipe.”

5.3.2 FINDINGS IN MUNICIPALITY B

TABLE 13 FINDINGS TABLES FOR TOWN B1

TOWN B1							
	Goal 1		Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6
Mechanisms	Education	Information	Public values	Substantive quality	Trust	Reduced Conflict	Cost effectiveness
Non-deliberative participatory mechanisms for providing information to the public							
Public notice							

Posters							
Loud hailer	1	1	3	3	3	3	1
Pamphlets	1	1	3	3	1	2	1
Newspaper							
Media (Radio/Tv)							
Deliberative participatory mechanisms							
Public hearing/ meeting	1	1	1	1	1	3	1
Advisory /ward committee/ ward councillor	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Focus groups	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Alternative mobile ICT mechanism							
ICT tool	1	1	2	3	3	3	1
Key	1 applicable (goal achieved) 2 possibly applicable (unsure if achieved) 3 not applicable (goal not achieved)						

The participants from Town B1 highly favoured focus groups and public meetings/hearings. These two mechanisms were considered the top two most effective mechanisms

in achieving the goals of public participation. These mechanisms were preferred because citizens felt empowered by being actively involved at every stage of the decision-making. This is what they had to say when asked which the most preferred mechanisms were and why:

“Definitely public meetings and focus groups were my favourite; they really give me a chance to be heard. We get to speak directly to the ward councillor and municipal leaders in the discussions. It actually feels like we have some power.”

“It makes us feel useful, and we get to hear other community member’s ideas.”

Although public meetings/public hearings were the most dominantly used, focus groups were rated as achieving more of the goals. Based on the participants’ experiences, participants found public meetings/public hearings useful in obtaining feedback on what was going on which helped to build trust in the ability and reliability of the government (Goal 4). Trust was a major value point for the citizens because it helped them feel free to share their views and concerns and helped them to contribute to suggestions on how to improve the service delivery. This is why focus groups were perceived as mechanisms that achieved all the goals.

“Focus groups were so enjoyable and informative, I felt educated about the new ICT project and we had a time where asked what our problems were and what we want to see improved.”(Goal 1 and Goal 3)

“For me it really helped me trust the municipality more because it felt like they were actively doing something about our problem and they were including us, which made me feel important unlike in the past.” (Goal 4 and Goal 3)

“It’s really cost efficient because even though the discussions can take long, it costs us nothing and often the focus groups were held in the main community hall. It was also easier to ask questions, unlike in big meetings.” (Goal 6)

The reason why the majority felt focus groups were useful in reducing conflict (Goal 5) was that, the group discussions resolved their issues. Furthermore, just being informed helped to pacify the citizens.

“We did not always agree on matters, but just keeping us informed and giving us an opportunity to iron out issues helps ease tension with the municipality.”

Focus groups were also considered cost effective (Goal 6), because they found value in engaging in the focus groups.

“Yes I agree, I consider focus groups cost effective. I think we learn quite a lot in those groups and it’s exciting as we get to meet other researchers and new leaders.”

As with focus groups, the majority also considered public meetings useful in informing and educating (Goal 1), incorporating public value (Goal2), promoting substantive quality (Goal3) and building trust (Goal 4) as well as being cost-effective (Goal 6).

“Public meetings are still one of those mechanisms that have been used for long time, it works if we have good leader, we defiantly get updated and informed on new mechanism or new projects in the areas that plan to improve our water and sanitation problems. Even letting us know when there is need for men to do some labour work.”(Goal 1)

“Constant public meetings help us to trust them because we value face to face interactions; we get to meet the people who can actually answer our questions and we express what we actually want. It also helps that they.”? (Goal 2, 3 and 4)

“For the most part they do listen to us, things do not always change but the meetings are still useful to keep us updated and are also cost effective.” (Goal 1 and Goal 6)

The only difference between the focus groups and public meetings/hearings was that public meetings were not considered a mechanism that reduces conflict (Goal 5). This was mainly due to the poor structuring and facilitation of public meetings. The participants expressed the view that if the municipality starts incorporating more local knowledge in the decisions it would improve the citizens’ satisfaction with decisions which would then

reduce conflict. Other than that, the participants considered public meetings as one of the most appropriate methods of engagement.

“Public meetings are the most appropriate method, we really get informed.”

According to the participants, the loudhailer and the pamphlet performed equally in terms of achieving the set goals. Both these mechanisms promoted three goals as follows: citizens feeling informed and educated (Goal 1), trust in the ability of municipality being built (Goal 4) and being cost-effective (Goal 6).

“Pamphlets were so well written and easy to understand which helped to give us information about the new ICT tool and how we can contact the municipality.”(Goal 1)

“We get to hear the loudhailer from everywhere, so even the elderly can be informed about meetings or when there are urgent messages like when there are water shortages or sewage running or when they are distributing food items.”(Goal 1)

“Us receiving some information, whether through loudhailer or pamphlets, helps to build trust with municipality it shows respect to at least keep us updated.” (Goal 4)

Not many participants elaborated on why they had rated the loudhailer and pamphlets as being cost-effective. The few who commented expressed the view that this was because neither mechanism had cost implications for them and no time constraints either.

“Though the pamphlets are not best mechanism they do not cost us anything. It’s so easy for me to come home and read up on what I may have missed out.”

Although the loudhailer and pamphlets were credited for their ability to keep participants informed and for their cost-effectiveness, they had shortfalls as well. The participants asserted that even though the introduction of pamphlets helped them feel like they are being heard this was not sufficient. They wanted an increased opportunity to actually contribute more to the decisions, so their public values (Goal 2) and local knowledge could also be incorporated (Goal 3 substantive quality). The use of a one-way communication flow limits the contribution they can make to the decision-making process.

“The problem I have with the pamphlets is it doesn’t really give us an opportunity to discuss the information provided, so there would be need for further discussions after the pamphlets have been read, so we can ask questions.”

“There is no direct dialogue with the municipality when we hear the loud hailer or read the pamphlets, it is one way communication.”

It was found that each mechanism had its strengths and weaknesses. In this regard, one would need to consider which mechanism to use depending on what goal they were trying to achieve. As seen in the case of pamphlets and loudhailers which may have been effective in informing citizens (Goal 1) but not at reducing conflict (Goal 5). As seen in the quotes below, there was a lack of confidence in whether pamphlets and loudhailers can reduce conflict (Goal 5). This lack of confidence in pamphlets and loudhailers is an indication that the two mechanisms are not the ideal mechanisms to use if one intends to reduce conflict:

“I still think loudhailers can reduce conflict because at least there some form of communication happening and we value being informed.”

“I don’t know how much conflict pamphlets can reduce, but I think it helps to see those introducing new mechanisms to accommodate those who are not able to attend the public meetings.”

As for the ICT tool and ward committee, they were lowly-rated and assigned to the bottom and least-effective of the mechanisms. It was found that the citizens preferred more the traditional mechanisms that permit face to face interaction than the ICT tool.

“I did not use the system because I prefer to speak directly to the ward councilor or walk to the municipal office.”

“I read about the ICT system and I tried it but they still took so long to attend to my problem, I was not sure if they had written it down, so I would rather talk to our leaders face to face and know that they heard me.”

When asked if the ICT's system would help build trust, the participants stated that due to the pre-existing distrust between them and the government, they doubted if they could trust that ICTs system. There was a general lack of confidence that the system could change the delivery efficiency as revealed in quotes below.

"Umm I don't know how much difference this mechanism can bring, the municipality has often let us down."

"I do not have much confidence in the ICT system, it sounds like a good idea but we are not used to such, what if they do not call us back?"

The finding drawn from the lack of trust in the performance of the ICTs system is that participation mechanisms are intrinsically linked to delivery. Public participation becomes irrelevant when there is an experience of non-delivery. This, becoming irrelevant of public participation, impacts the mechanism to such an extent that no mechanism will be perceived as useful.

Despite the criticism leveled by participants at the ICTs system, the participants still considered it a mechanism that educated and informed (Goal 1) them and was cost effective (Goal 6).

"It was quite informative to see how the ICT tool and use of cell phones could improve communication with the municipality, so that they can attend to our problems."

"Yes we can learn from using the mechanism but it just not something I like to use."

It was inconclusive if the ICT system could promote the incorporation of public value (Goal 2) hence the respondents marked it as unsure. The uncertainty of whether this mechanism achieved Goal 2 points to the fact it was not effective for attaining this goal. This is primarily because the purpose of the ICT tool was not really to give the citizens an opportunity to share their views. It was merely more of an alternative means for citizens to report their faults to the municipality without having to travel long distances. This shows that careful consideration needs to be given to choosing the appropriate mechanism as different mechanisms yield different outcomes.

Some of the challenges identified with this community were that the leadership and the citizens still seemed disconnected and this made it difficult for the system to be successful. The lack of rapport between the two impacted their ability to trust the new ICT system.

Regardless of the fact that the ward committees were the main means of engaging with the citizens, they were the least- favoured because participants had no relationship with the ward committee.

“We have no relationship with our ward committee, they keep changing them and often they do not do anything about our concerns.”

The ward committee was perceived as being inefficient and not fulfilling their mandate as stipulated in the Municipal Systems Act 2000 which was meant to keep citizens informed, provide feedback, ensure the involvement of citizens in decision-making, listen and present the citizens needs to the municipality. In fact, as shown in Table 13, this mechanism was perceived as not achieving any of the six goals suggested by Beierle (1998).

TABLE 14 FINDINGS FOR TOWN B2

TOWN B2							
	Goal 1		Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6
Mechanisms	Education	Information	Public values	Substantive quality	Trust	Reduced Conflict	Cost effectiveness
Non-deliberative participatory mechanisms for providing information to the public							
Public notice							
Posters							
Loud hailer	1	1	3	3	3	3	1
Pamphlets	1	1	1	3	1	3	1
Newspaper							

Media (radio/tv)							
Deliberative participatory mechanism							
Public hearing/ meeting	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
Advisory /ward committee/ ward councillor	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Focus groups	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Alternative mobile ICT mechanism							
ICT tool	3	3	1	3	3	3	1
Key	1 applicable (goal achieved) 2 possibly applicable (unsure if achieved) 3 not applicable (goal not achieved)						

As with Town B1, focus groups and public meetings/ hearings were perceived as the two most effective mechanisms in achieving the intended goals of public participation. Although public meetings and ward committees were the most dominantly used mechanisms, focus groups were the most preferred. In this regard, focus groups were considered the most ideal because they promoted all the six intended goals of public participation discussed by Beierle (1998). The fact that this mechanism achieved all the goals shows that if it is used well, it is effective in promoting the desired objectives of public participation which are to inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower as described in the Guide on Public Participation in the Public Service (DPSA, 2014). The participants felt that the focus group provided space in which they could freely express themselves, especially when considering

the nature of small groups in relation to large public meetings which, by contrast, do not have such space for building trust.

“What I liked about the focus groups is that I feel more comfortable to express myself than in a huge crowd. In those meetings we take turns to listen to each other and we all contribute our views. This does help us build a better relationship with our leaders, which helps us trust them more.” (Goal 2 Public values and Goal 4 Building trust)

“During the discussions they asked us what suggestions we have to improve the current water and sanitation service delivery and they came back provided feedback, this means they are a reliable team.” (Goal 3 Substantive quality and Goal 4 Building trust)

Among its other attributes, the process was educational and informative for the citizens in that they learned more about the new ICT app and how important it is for them to play their role in reporting faults in order to improve service delivery.

“It was nice to be taught about how important it is for us also play our part to improve the service delivery. They introduced a new ICT tool, but I am not sure if many people will use it.”
“As we share, we learn from each other in the group and it brings us closer as a community and also with our municipal leaders. We understood more about the public participation process and our rights to be included”

Focus groups were also perceived as a mechanism that reduced conflict (Goal 5) and were cost- effective (Goal 6).

“Yes, yes it does help to reduce conflict because we get to understand what is being done to improve communication channels with the municipality. We were able to actually discuss a way forward and what we think about the current water and sanitation problems, especially the issue of costs to contact the municipality or having to walk long distances at times.”

Public meetings were also perceived as a mechanism that assists in informing and educating citizens (Goal 1). The only difference between the focus group and public meetings was that participants felt that the ways in which the public meetings were being held did not always incorporate the public's value (Goal 2) in the decision-making process. This opposes the purposes of public participation as stipulated in the White Paper of 1998 (Republic of South Africa , 1998).

"The public meetings help to inform us on new policy changes and the next plans for improving the access to water, but they do not always give us a chance to give feedback what we think."

"It seems like they let us speak but do not really make the changes we asked for, or when we ask for feedback on the matter we suggested , they say we will answer in the next meeting."

As was the case in Town B1, the loudhailer and pamphlet were also rated on the same level in terms of the goals they did or did not achieve. Both mechanisms were perceived as being efficient in educating and informing the citizens (Goal 1), incorporating their public values (Goal 2) despite being one-way communication channels. In this case public value meant that they incorporated the people's needs or concerns in order to enhance the chances of obtaining reliable information. The provision of information played a major role in building trust in the reliability of the municipality (Goal 4).

"I agree that this mechanism informs me of when the next public meeting is so that I can attend." (Goal 1)

Parallel to some of the comments expressed by some of the citizens from Municipality A, pamphlets were classified as useful mechanisms which can be used in presenting topical/ current issues. In this sense pamphlets became an information tool serving to keep participants informed.

“The pamphlets helped us to know about the new project reporting and how it could possibly make the municipality attend to our problems sooner.”

The pamphlets were perceived as promoting public values (Goal 2) mainly because, despite not physically providing the opportunity for people to share their views and express their preferences, the design and content of the pamphlet took into account their preferences from previous complaints (i.e. language, more flexible mechanisms to accommodate those at work, the need for feedback). The fact that the pamphlets were written in a language they understand and showed evidence of future plans that were going to bring change to service delivery helped to build trust in the municipality officials (Goal 4).

“The pamphlets show that changes are being made, which is encouraging, when we start to see change, it helps us build closer relationship with the municipality.”

“It was easy to understand what was written; they even made sure it was written in all three languages in the area. I also liked the fact that at least when you come back from trips or anything we can still read it and be updated. They even had a number for us to call.”

The study found that mechanisms that promote inclusivity of the illiterate accommodate the elderly and provide updates tended to build trust as in the case of the loudhailer. The appraisal of the loudhailer by participants was positive in that they recognized its scope for building trust in the integrity and reliability of the municipality (Goal 4).

“The elderly and those who cannot easily read or use the phones find it so much easier to be verbally notified when there are meetings or urgent notices. It may not be often but at least we know that that we being called to be involved in the process.”

Despite not promoting substantive quality (Goal 3) or assisting in reducing conflict (Goal 5), the loudhailer and pamphlets were still considered cost-efficient (Goal 6). They were both considered cost effective primarily because neither of these mechanisms had cost implications for the participants.

While the participants rated the loudhailer as achieving some of the goals, they were, nevertheless, not satisfied with this form of communication. It was found that there was a lack of proficiency in how announcements were being made using the loudhailer, this mechanism was not being used skilfully which points to poor leadership. The participants expressed frustration with how announcements are not always made at the most convenient times. Some participants complained that the municipal leaders were not consistent in making sure the announcements were made in all the areas.

“They use the loudhailer the most but it is not always being used correctly. It depends on who is on duty to make the announcements. At times they do not go to all the towns. We often get told by our neighbours.”

The findings reveal that public participation would be more effective if it incorporated the use of multiple mechanisms at the same time. As shown in this town, pamphlets were not the top effective mechanism yet the participants appealed for more frequent use of pamphlets and an increase the volume of information carried by the pamphlets for the purpose of keeping the citizens properly informed. According to the citizens this would help them make more informed decisions and assist their preparation in terms of what is subsequently discussed in the next community meeting.

“Pamphlets should actually be used more; it would be more helpful if they put more information in the pamphlets. Even summaries of issues previously discussed and the next points for discussions.”

“They can make the pamphlets more interesting by making encouraging campaigns that improve the water and sanitation or tips on hygiene to encourage us to take an interest in our community.”

The two least-favoured mechanisms were the ICT tool and the ward committee, with the ward committee perceived as not achieving any of the intended public participation goals. In the prevailing dispensation, ward committees and ward councillors were the main forms of engaging with the municipality. However, they were described as incompetent in fulfilling their roles as described in the code of conduct for ward committees (Chapter 2 of this study; (SALGA, 2016). It was found that both the ward committees and the councillors were not easily accessible and that they did not always fulfil their duties with regard to the holding of meetings, neither did they care to obtain the views nor the needs of the community. The participants in this town had a bad relationship with the ward committee which was really impacting how this mechanism was perceived.

“I have never seen the ward councillor, maybe on once or twice.”

“We have a bad relationship: they are not efficient in their job. They are too busy with their own issues and only seem to care when it’s near election time where they may gain some favours from the government.”

“The ward councillor is not presenting the views of the community, it seems like they do not listen or they are not actively doing anything to change our problems.”

With regard to the ICT system, although none of the participants had heard of the system, they were still prepared to comment on it. The participants were of the opinion that if the system had been well-publicized it would have improved the efficiency of the municipality and encouraged participation in the public participation process. From their perspective, the system takes into account the need for a free reporting system. For these reasons they

rated the mechanism as incorporating public values (Goal 2). This evaluation was largely occasioned by the citizens' preferences for a cost-effective method. This shows the appreciation citizens have for mechanisms that are cost-effective in the context of their current economic challenges as outlined in the site description in Chapter 4, chief of which is the low employment rate. The economic statuses of community members would be an important factor to consider when selecting the most appropriate mechanisms for rural municipalities.

“Sure, for us this mechanism is cost effective especially since you can just call the toll free line. It's just a pity the ward councillors did not inform the rest of the community or at least remind them.”

TABLE 15 FINDINGS TABLES FOR TOWN B3

TOWN B3							
	Goal 1		Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6
Mechanisms	Education	Information	Public values	Substantive quality	Trust	Reduced Conflict	Cost effectiveness
Non-deliberative participatory mechanisms for providing information to the public							
Public notice							
Posters							
Loud hailer	1	1	3	3	3	3	1
Pamphlets	1	2	3	3	1	2	1
Newspaper	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Media (radio/tv)							
Deliberative participatory mechanisms							

Public hearing/ meeting	1	1	2	1	2	2	1
Advisory /ward committee/ ward councillor	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Focus groups	1	1	2	2	2	2	3
Alternative mobile ICT mechanism							
ICT tool	1	1	3	1	1	3	1
Key	1 applicable (goal achieved) 2 possibly applicable (unsure if goal was achieved) 3 not applicable (goal not achieved)						

Interestingly, in comparison to all the towns, participants in this town favoured the ICT tool most. The ICT alongside public meetings and pamphlets were perceived as the three most effective mechanisms in promoting the six goals. In contrast to the participants from the other towns, these participants had received the pamphlets about the ICT tool, and were so enthusiastic about it that a few of them tested the system and saw that it worked well for them. Thus, these participants rated the mechanism as one that built trust in the reliability of the municipality (Goal 4). In addition, receiving feedback from the municipality was found to be crucial in trust formation as indicated in the utterances below:

“It worked wonderful for me, it was so efficient!”

“To actually have the municipality call you back and come fix your problem faster was so good, it makes us try them more.”

There were, however, some who still preferred to use previous traditional methods and the majority of those who did use it preferred it over pre-existing mechanisms. This was

mainly because people preferred mechanisms that respect their cultural norms and expectations of face to face interaction. Given the prevalence of low ICT skills, failure by the municipality to factor in this reality can result in reduced interaction between it and the citizens. Such an eventuality would, in reality, be a devaluing of the public participation process that could deal a fatal blow to inclusive decision-making arrangements. This shows that if the municipality were to proceed to implement the ICT system in the whole municipality they would need to consider leaving the traditional mechanisms running. It would be more effective to use a combination of both methods to accommodate both sides in the community. Those who opted for the ICT tool felt educated and informed (Goal1) through the process of using it.

“Most of us can agree that we learnt a lot from how to actually use out phones and what the installation of the ICT system aimed to do. Now we know there more cost efficient ways to present our water and sanitation faults.”

“We can now have a way to hold the municipality accountable, since they were supposed to be recording all the reports and attending to our calls, making sure they keep us updated when fault will be fixed.”

Conversation with participants suggested that they had begun to feel quite empowered through ICT-related processes. Accordingly, the ICT system was rated as a cost-effective one (Goal 6) and perceived as promoting substantive quality (Goal 3). The participants did not expand on why they thought it achieved Goal 3. Their main reason in terming it cost-effective was that it was a comparatively much more user-friendly and convenient mechanism for frequent phone users. The absence of expenses, and the high efficiency in response time made it even more preferable.

The participants did however express their concerns for the majority of the population who tend to be elderly. According to the participants this age group tends not to be as active on their phones and probably only use their phones for basic calls but not for reporting faults to the municipality. They seem stuck in their ways of rather walking to the

municipality for face to face dialogue or talking to the ward councillor. They also felt the process might prove challenging for the not so technically clued up illiterate elderly.

“The system is easy to use and great for us young people but we are the minority who can read and who more active on our phones. I am not sure the older members will use the ICT system. It’s hard to introduce something people are not familiar with especially the mature generation.”

The participants did not consider the ICT as a mechanism that incorporated public values (Goal 2) Public value in this case refers to providing citizens an opportunity to express their views on the issue at hand and possibly suggest how to solve the problem. The ICT tool did not satisfy their preference for in-depth dialogue with municipality officials and the need for feedback. This was mainly because the ICT tool was not designed for dialogue but rather as an alternative means for citizens to report water or sanitation faults in a more affordable manner. The use of the ICT system was, however, meant to ensure that citizens are provided feedback on problems reported and also kept informed of progress made.

“We do not get to say much, just to report a fault or send a please call, there is no room for us to present other ideas or queries, to engage with municipality, this for sure cannot be used alone as the only way. What if there are network problems?”

Public meetings were perceived as a mechanism that educates and informs the public (Goal 1). It was found that the way public meetings had been conducted promoted the third Batho Pele principle “access” which provides for the need to ensure that citizens have access to information (The World Bank, 2011). Participants were informed of future municipal goals, budget issues and plans to improve service delivery. They were also updated on new projects.

“The meetings are informative when conducted well, the leaders would discuss the IDP presenting the goals for next few years and what areas need improvement and more resources.”

“We would learn about new projects and contribute our views and present the knowledge we have on figuring a way forward.”

Public meetings were also rated as a mechanism that promoted substantive quality (Goal 3) and was cost-effective (Goal 6). This was because they found value in the process outcomes regardless of how long-winding the meetings sometimes were.

“Public meetings are effective in terms of what we achieve in those meetings, we walk out with a clearer understanding than over the phone or newspaper and save us expenses since meetings are near.”

“At times the meetings do take long but I still consider it cost-effective” (Goal 6)

Half the participants perceived this mechanism as one that incorporates public value (Goal 2) whilst the other half disagreed hence it was rated as unsure. The uncertainty among participants was because they felt the public meetings need improvement. They expressed the need for more innovative ways of facilitating the meetings to encourage engagement and attendance.

“It would be more interesting if they could find more exciting ways for us to participate, incentives like prizes for managing water well or tips on how we can manage our water for agriculture through more engaging presentations.”

The investigation was inconclusive on whether or not public meetings built trust (Goal 4) and/or reduced conflict (Goal 5). This was due to the fact they did not feel that their views were being taken into consideration in the decision-making process. This raises questions regarding the integrity of the leaders and reveals that because the participants were not being empowered, they were therefore not achieving the goal of empowering as directed by the public participation guide of South Africa (DPSA, 2014). It was clear from the discussions that the participants felt there was a need to improve the public meeting process.

“It is likely this mechanism can be used to strengthen the relationship with our leaders, but need to be willing to change and actually take into consideration what we would have shared.”

What causes the disputes is the fact that we say one thing but they decide to do their own thing at the end. ”

Pamphlets similar to the other two methods were rated as informative and educational (Goal 1). Participants were informed and educated of new projects and this was promoting the goal of informing stipulated in the public participation guide in South Africa (DPSA, 2014)

“The pamphlets were useful to inform us of new projects in the area but we did not have a say, we do not get to interact through this mechanism it’s more just to keep us updated.”

Access to useful information was found to be an essential component of the process of building trust in the integrity of the municipality, thereby promoting Goal 4 (Building trust). This mechanism was perceived as being cost-effective (Goal 6) although the participants offered no explanation for this. However, the citizens felt that pamphlets failed to achieve the other goals because they did not give the citizens an opportunity to respond. Although citizens appreciated the mechanism’s usefulness in keeping citizens informed without needing long meetings, it was nevertheless identified as a mechanism that could not work independently of others. This suggests that eclectic use in which appropriate mechanisms for each municipality is made can create dividends for the public participation process.

“It is good idea especially for those after work but like my neighbour said it cannot be only mechanism, it gives us no actual chance to contribute to the decisions.”

“We do not get to address things we do not agree on so it can never reduce conflict.”

In contrast to the other towns in Municipality B, focus groups were amongst the bottom three mechanisms in terms of their rate of goal achievement. Due to unfamiliarity with focus groups, participants were not so keen on using this tool as a participatory mechanism. In this municipality, focus groups achieved only one goal, that of educating and informing the public (Goal 1). It was uncertain if the focus groups could have achieved the other goals as evidenced by the mixed feelings. A perusal of the participants’ responses

indicates the apparent feeling that if improvements were made with regard to how the focus groups were conducted, they had potential to achieve all the other goals.

“We didn’t use it much so I am not so used to these methods, the discussions were informative.”

The majority concluded that focus groups were not a cost- effective mechanism (Goal 6). Once again they did not expand on why they had this feeling. However, it is clear that they were not accustomed to this mechanism hence they could not share much.

The loudhailer was amongst the top three least-preferred mechanisms and only achieved two goals which were educating and informing (Goal 1) and cost- effectiveness (Goal 6). Despite it not achieving the other intended goals, loudhailers were credited for accommodating the illiterate community members, therefore promoting the principle of inclusivity and diversity stipulated in the National Policy Framework for Public Participation 2007 (DPLG, 2007). Loudhailers promoted access to information which is the third principles of the Batho-Pele principles (Department of Public Service and Administration, 1997). However, the government officials were not always proficient in their delivery of information. This points to poor skills of staff and poor management to ensure announcements are being made with an appropriate timeframe. However, it also shows the weakness of this mechanism that it is not guaranteed to be heard by everyone.

“It easier for some of us, who cannot read, to hear announcements from the loudhailer, it keeps us informed and the good thing is we do not even have to travel anywhere, it comes to us.”

“I strongly agree that this mechanism keeps us informed about important public notices so that we could better prepare, but at times they make the announcement a bit too late. For example they do not always give us time to prepare for the water shortages.”

“To be honest not everyone listens and the announcements need to be made more than once because at times were so busy playing music or busy.”

While taking cognisance of the limitations of the loudhailer participants nevertheless appreciated the protection it gave them against having to incur costs as expressed below. This is important considering the financial constraints being faced by citizens in these municipalities as discussed in Chapter Four (Ndlambe Local Municipality, 2015; Statistics SA, 2016)

“The fact that we do not have to pay anything or spend long time in a meeting makes loudhailers cost- effective”, because I do not always have time”

As evident from the participant’s comments below regarding the loudhailer, citizens preferred two-way communication channels. Loudhailers, unlike two-way communication methods, did not provide citizens the opportunity to express their views or resolve outstanding issues. Therefore, the loudhailer has no room for conflict management. This is why they were not perceived as promoting public value (Goal 2), substantive quality (Goal 3) or reduce conflict (Goal 5).

“You see I like the fact that announcements are made but it does not give us a chance to respond back to the government officials.”

“It only promotes communication one- way, we actually hold no power over decisions.”

The indications in this case suggest that there is access to information and even some empowering of citizens, but only to a limited extent. The participation shortfall arose because not only did the citizens want to feel empowered and informed, but they also wanted an opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process. This opposes some of the objectives of public participation stipulated in the White Paper of 1998, which among other things are directed at ensuring that consumer input into how services are conducted is captured. The mechanism also fails to uphold the fundamental goal of public participation which is to empower citizens as stipulated in legislation (DPSA, 2014).

“The elderly people like this mechanisms because it is easier, but they do not think this mechanism is enough alone. It just passes information: we do not get to contribute to new ideas.”

Ward committees were described as the least effective mechanism when promoting the goals of public participation. Ward committees were found not upholding their mandate as stipulated in the code of conduct and which is to educate/inform and consult citizens, present the needs of citizens, provide feedback and attend to their concerns (SALGA, 2016). In fact, they were also considered “useless” in this town as they did not achieve any of the goals.

“They are useless: they never show up when we need them, except when there is a public meeting.”

In addition, the participants questioned the competency of the ward committee, given that the perception was that they lacked adequate skills and knowledge about their roles. For these reasons the ward committee was considered unreliable, particularly with regard to representing the needs of citizens. Consequently, the growth of distrust in the ability and reliability of the members became automatic. Thus, the ward committee does not promote trust-building (Goal 4).

“There is no way I can trust that ward committee half the time they do not know what is going on.”

“They seem more caught up with political matters, they favour people from the same party.”

“They do not always give us time to share our concerns, in fact I don’t think they even have a say in the decisions.”

Newspapers were not used often. However, the study was inconclusive regarding whether or not this mechanism could achieve any of the six goals. Some participants found the mechanism useful in informing and educating (Goal 1), especially for those who would be at work or were too busy to attend meetings and focus groups, whilst others considered this mechanism exclusive of illiterate members. It also proved challenging in terms of accessibility as it was not frequently sent to the rural areas.

“Not everyone has access to it: it only comes once a week to our area and we have to go to the main Town if we want it more often.”

“It may not be the best because not everyone can read, but it will be helpful to keep those who are quite busy at work informed. They would be able to read and catch up anytime.”

“I wish they would use newspapers more often. Newspapers tend to have more information, including jobs, major notices and just keeping us more up to date of what’s going on instead of waiting to be told.”

Although this mechanism only provided one-way communication, it was valued for keeping the participants informed.

5.4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF CITIZENS PERCEPTIONS FROM ALL THE TOWNS IN MUNICIPALITY A AND B

As presented in the above section, it was found that the participants from each town had different perspectives on the mechanisms that they considered ideal. This shows that communities are not homogeneous and what works in one town may not work in another town. For example, there were different views about public notice mechanisms such as pamphlets and the ward committee. As seen in findings (Tables 10 - 15) in Municipality A pamphlets were the least effective mechanism yet in Municipality B pamphlets were perceived as one of the top three effective mechanisms to promote public participation goals. Whilst, ward committee was popular in Municipality A, they were however not popular in municipality B (Refer to tables 10 – 15). In one town public meetings were the most ideal yet in another ward committees were the most ideal. It was therefore wise of the South African government to permit local municipalities the autonomy to choose which mechanisms are most suitable for their community, with the exception of ward committee (Public Service Commission, 2008).

The study also found that factors such the literacy levels of participants had a major role to play in qualifying or disqualifying the suitability of a mechanism. Newspapers were not used and hence mechanisms such as pamphlets and the ICT tool proved challenging. These mechanisms were not most ideal in promoting the stipulated public participation

principles of inclusivity, diversity, building community participation and ensuring accessibility (DPLG, 2007). This shows that the implementers of public participation need to have an understanding of the community they intended to engage with and understand the needs, cultural norms, ages and languages of the host communities. This section provides an analysis of the overall views held about the efficiency of the existing participatory mechanisms by all the participants; the mechanisms were the main themes.

FOCUS GROUPS

Overall, focus groups in comparison to all the other mechanisms were perceived as one of the top three most effective in promoting the intended goals with the exception of Town B 3. In contrast to Beierle's (1998) study, focus groups did more than just provide decision-makers with public values (Goal 2) and substantive information (Goal 3) to improve decisions. As shown in tables 10 – 14, in some cases it promoted most if not all six of the intended goals suggested in the Beierle framework (1998) and also promoted the five goals (inform, consult, involve, empower collaborate) noted in the guide for public participation in South Africa (DPSA, 2014).

As presented in the findings, this mechanism was accommodating of the principles of inclusivity, diversity, and building community capacity, all fundamental goals of efficient public participation (DPLG, 2007). Inclusivity in the sense that every member's views were welcomed in the focus group discussions. Diversity was catered for in the sense that the voluntary participation was open to women, men and the youth and even accommodated illiterate elderly community members. Including the illiterate community was important considering the low level of educational attainment in these municipalities as shown in figure 6 and 8 in chapter 4 (Statistics SA, 2016; Statistics South Africa, 2016). In fact, according to the participants they are the majority of the population in both these Municipalities.

The focus groups were held in a language they could understand, accordingly, English and Xhosa were used. This meant that this mechanism also promoted the principle of accessibility as stipulated in the national public participation guide (DPLG, 2007). Similar

to the findings in the Siphuma (2009) study in Thulamela Municipality, the focus groups in this study were useful in involving the public in the consultative process. They were also found to be empowering to participants since they provided space for stakeholders to share their ideas, assist in problem-solving and provide relevant information on the issues raised. These findings agree with those of international authors such as Freeman (2008) in which he states that focus groups encourage participation especially from those whom often feel they do not have much to offer.

Despite the fact that focus groups encourage openness among members, there are some who may still be hesitant to speak, and unless the discussion is carefully facilitated, the more vocal characters will dominate the discussion. This development emphasises the need for skilled practitioners with knowledge about group dynamics on how to probe and facilitate.

It is important to note that conducting focus groups via independent parties who are perceived as unbiased has an increased chance of building trust in areas where there is pre-existing mistrust in the ability of a municipality. This may have been the reason why focus groups were considered one of the most effective mechanisms in trust building in this study. Based on the high satisfaction levels with the focus group process, the facilitators were well skilled. This finding concurs with studies in Australia in which the quality of the facilitator was the leading reason for the success of the focus groups in the environmental sector (Yee, 2010). In addition, as expressed in the findings, receiving feedback on previous discussions and actually seeing new changes validated the credibility of the facilitators. On the basis of these findings, it is evident that when citizens can actually see that their views and preferences are being considered in the decision-making process, it solidifies the relationship and reinforces the principle of trust as desired by the South African government (DPLG, 2007). It was also found, as discussed by Beierle (1998), that when the first four goals are achieved, conflict is reduced (view tables 11- 14).

There was however a dissimilarity regarding the effectiveness of focus groups from participants in Town B3. This confirms that while a mechanism may be effective, it may not

be the most suitable for every community. These participants did not favour focus groups and considered the focus group to be one of the least effective in attaining the goals of public participation in comparison to other mechanisms in that town (view table 15). It only served as an information mechanism which provided citizens with information about new government initiatives. Although participants did not empathize with why it only attained Goal 1, it can be presumed that they were not familiar with this mechanism as it had seldom been used. This mechanism was not considered to be trust-building nor empowering in Town B3. This discontentment expressed consolidates Scheumann et al (2011) in the notion that the mere existence of a mechanism does not always mean the inclusion of citizens nor trust being built or power being shared.

Overall it seems from the views expressed by the majority of participants that focus groups based upheld some of the Batho – Pele principles presented in the White Paper of 1998 (Department of Public Service and Administration, 1997). Citizens testified to being consulted (Principle 1) and felt that this mechanism gave them a chance to influence decisions. A majority of the participants in Town B3 also felt they were treated with respect, courtesy and consideration as shown by the fact that it built trust and empowered them thereby promoting courtesy (principle 2). The fact that the majority of the citizens considered this mechanism to be effective in educating and informing (Goal 1) means that Principle 5 on information was promoted. That the participants rated this mechanism as one that builds trust and is cost-effective, means that Principle 6 (openness and transparency) and principle 8 (value for money) were also promoted (Department of Public Service and Administration, 1997).

Analysing the findings regarding this mechanism across Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, encourages participation ranging from Level Three to Level Six which consists of informing, consultation, placation and partnership. This means that participants have a partnership with facilitators and that they are informed, heard, and they have a voice. However, the only concern is that neither of these levels ensures that citizens' contributions will influence the final decision-making process. Therefore, although it is an effective mechanism its usefulness depends on the users.

PUBLIC MEETINGS/HEARINGS

Public meetings were the most dominantly used mechanism in all the towns and it was also viewed as one of the top three most effective mechanisms in achieving the intended six goals of public participation in all the towns except in Town A1 (See Tables 10-15). This shows that both the municipality and citizens are in agreement with the use of public meetings and consider them an appropriate tool for rural areas. These findings support previous claims about public meetings/ hearings being the most preferred mechanism by government officials in South Africa (DPLG, 2007; Public Service Commission, 2008). The findings also concur with studies in Australia in which this mechanism was the oldest and most dominant (Adams, 2004). The reasons why both parties (citizens and government officials) favour public meetings may be different. From a municipalities view, public meetings are useful tools for informing citizens on various matters such as council decisions, community rights, duties and municipal affairs (DPLG, 2007). From my deduction of the findings, public meetings were also considered a time-constructive method of communicating to a large crowd of people. This was pointed out in legislation as one of the reasons municipal leaders in South Africa preferred this method (DPSA, 2014).

Whilst from the citizen's perspective, public meetings were perceived as being empowering as they provided a space for citizens to be informed/educated, to express their views and contribute alternative suggestions. As stated by Czimmerman (2013) the objective of public meetings in the US is to allow citizens the opportunity to share their opinions and concerns over decisions, which we see happening in this South African-based study.

All citizens except for those in Town A1 also considered public meetings as cost-effective in terms of travelling time and costs since the meetings were held in main halls within their community (10 - 15). This coincides with Buccus' (1996) assessment of public meetings; he states that they are easily accessible for rural communities due to fact the meetings are held in close distance of where they reside. This is important considering the socio-economic challenges discussed in chapter 4 (Statistics SA, 2016; Statistics South Africa, 2016).

Based on the majority's views as shown in the tables (11-15), public meetings/hearings were acknowledged as promoting high levels of trust. This supports the Beierle framework (1998) which asserts that two- way communication mechanisms such as public meetings are useful in building trust, especially when the first three goals are also achieved. However, as much as public meetings encourage dialogue, marginalized groups might not speak up because they might not feel confident speaking in mass-group settings such as public meetings. Further studies would need to be conducted to assess the likelihood of marginalised citizens actively engaging through this forum.

Similar to European studies situated in the environmental sector, for the majority public meetings increased awareness, and were thus rated as promoting Goal 1 on informing and educating (See tables 11- 15). Access to information, in particular, the receiving of feedback on matters previously-raised aided in building trust, thus showing how important it was to citizens. Public meetings therefore promoted the fifth Batho Pele principle. As mentioned in the Batho Pele principle 5, access to information is important to ensure good governance. Citizens must have access to "accurate information about the services entitled to them"(Department of Public Service and Administration, 1997).

The findings from this study coincide with those in the Laurian and Shaw (2009) study based in the US on participation in planning. In both cases it was found that public meetings in comparison with other mechanisms were the most influential decision-making mechanism. This was mainly because public meetings in actual fact provided for meaningful participation by increasing awareness and ensuring increased agency, transparency and inclusiveness as described by (Laurian and Shaw, 2009). This shows that this method promotes the intended benefits of public participation such as greater accountability and community empowerment (DPLG, 2007). However, the difference between the US study and the current one is that regardless of the fact public meetings in South Africa are effective, this process does not guarantee power-sharing over the final decision making as expressed by participant from Town A2 and B1. This could potentially cause continuous reluctance from citizens to engage.

Public meetings being a two-way participatory mechanism are antithetical to one-way communication channels. Accordingly, this mechanism gives citizens the opportunity to interact face to face with citizens. This face to face interaction is an important cultural norm in this society and cannot therefore be side-lined. It also made it possible for citizens to address conflicting views in person until an agreement was reached. The participants found this method informative and that it helped bring understanding on what action plans are being designed to improve their water and sanitation issues. This was useful in reducing conflict (Goal 5) as presented in the findings tables 12& 13.

Most importantly, public meetings/hearings were considered all-inclusive, especially for the illiterate elderly and they respected the citizens' value of interpersonal face to face interaction. This shows that public meetings are promoting public participation this is in keeping with the Constitution of South Africa 1996; the White Paper on Local Government 1998 and the Public Participation Framework of 2007 that stipulates public participation should be inclusive to all. Inclusivity as pointed out by Laurain and Shaw (2009) was essential for public participation to be considered meaningful.

The findings in this study are similar to those of Cayton (2004) and Abelson et al (2003) studies, which indicates that deliberative methods, particularly those that promote two-way communication such as public meetings/ hearings encourage higher levels of engagement compared to other methods. This does not mean that this mechanism does not have shortfalls. In this particular case, it did not always attain all the goals as it did in Town B3. Some participants from A2 and B1 felt that there was room for improvement. Some of the main criticisms were that the meetings were not being held often enough and consistently enough and that they were not being facilitated in a manner that actually incorporated the public's views in the decision making process. This situation is antithetical to the South African public participation policy that requires public involvement in all stages of decision-making on any service delivery issues that affect their life (Legislative Sector South Africa, 2013). In fact participants in Town A1 did not even rate it; they considered it a non-existent mechanism. It had only been used once or twice and clearly left no positive impression on them as participants.

WARD COMMITTEE

Overall, in terms of the preferences expressed, the ward committee was not on the same footing as public meetings and focus groups. It was only perceived as an effective mechanism in two of the towns whilst the majority did not share this sentiment.

The study shows that the quality of leadership is a key influence on the effectiveness of the ward committee, especially with regard to qualities such as being trustworthy, reliable, accessible and accountable communicators who are also proactive and are therefore given to listening to and addressing the needs of citizens. As shown in Tables 11 and 12, participants from towns in which ward committees were trusted and had a better relationship with citizens performed better in promoting the intended goals of public participation presented in the Beierle (1998) framework.

Accordingly, it must be concluded that ward committee members need to exhibit characteristics of integrity, sincerity and honesty in order to enhance in the citizens trust in their ability and genuineness. This work ethic would align with the core principle of trust/commitment/respect as required in the national policy framework for public participation (DPLG, 2007). With this alignment in place citizen participation is encouraged with the result that the process of addressing issues of mistrust is assisted.

In addition, the fact that conflict was reduced in these two towns shows that unlike the committees in the other towns, the ward committees here had a clear understanding of their roles. It is therefore important for municipality to ensure that all ward committee and ward councillors are aware that it is their responsibility to manage queries, complaints and manage disputes. The findings show that the reduction of conflict leads to more publicly accepted decision which morel to be more sustainable. These findings also confirm the pivotal role ward committees can play in the public participation process as pointed out in the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2000). These findings also validate Tshabalala (2007) and Taylor (2011) whose conclusions were that ward committees are an essential tool for promoting democracy. Furthermore, the ward committees are shown to assist in providing feedback, mobilizing people and

communicating with citizens to help build trust in municipality which was evident in these two towns.

Ward committees were supposed to operate partnerships between the community and municipality, encourage participation, facilitate meetings, keep citizens informed and raise awareness of community needs in the municipality (DPLG, 2007; SALGA, 2016). In this regard this study found that the majority of participants were neither consulted, informed, empowered nor collaborated with. This is direct conflict with the provisions considered essential to the success of public participation (DPSA, 2014). These led to the participants' dissatisfaction with the ward committee.

As also observed in the Tshabalala (2007) findings, the relationship between ward councillor, ward committee and community had a major impact on the public participation process. Hence the differences between municipalities, the ward committee had greater acceptance in Municipality A than in Municipality B. In towns where participants had a bad relationship the mechanism failed to promote any of the intended goals of public participation (See Tables 10, 13, 14 and 15).

In this study, ward committees are overall perceived as failing to promote a partnership with citizens as required by the Local Government: Municipal Services ACT 32 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2000). The majority of participants did not feel that the ward committee represented the needs of the people. In fact, they alleged that they are hardly ever consulted and did not feel involved in the decision-making process. The findings of Cavil and Sohail (2004) in a separate study are corroborated by the findings of this study given that in both cases the participants are not made aware of what is happening.

In contrast to the Beierle framework (1998) and as shown in Table 2, the majority of participants did not perceive the ward committee as increasing engagement between the various stakeholders. According to Beierle (1998) mechanisms such as advisory groups (ward committee) fall into Group B (See Figure 1 and 2) and are meant to increase trust and also achieve the first four goals thereby increasing the citizens' decision-making powers. However, in this study and for the majority of participants, this mechanism did not

increase their influence in the decision- making process. Furthermore, as expressed by participants from Town B3, participants were not sure whether the ward committee had influence over the decisions made or if they were just puppets. This concern was also pointed out by Arnstein (1969). According to Arnstein (1969) advisory committees may appear as though they have influence over decisions when most times they only present their views but have no power to guarantee that their views are considered in reaching the final decisions. Since there is evidence that some participants ranked the mechanism highly, any thinking that there may be no value in the process is thus negated. Indications are that there is a need for improvement in the quality of leaders. It seems that participants would rather opt for mechanisms that promote active participation.

PAMPHLETS

As shown in the findings (Tables 10-14), the majority of participants viewed pamphlets as being less-effective than other mechanisms in promoting the goals. In this respect, the findings show that focus groups and public meetings are ascendant. According to Arnstein (1969) pamphlets promote participation at information level where citizens are merely made aware of the existence of certain information, but have no power over decisions.

At the individual level, without comparing this mechanism to others, it was considered useful in educating and informing (Goal 1) citizens in all the towns about new initiatives and was credited with giving a clear understanding of how to use the ICT tool (Tables 11-15). According to the participants, the provision of information helped build trust (Goal 4) in the municipality as shown in Towns B1, B2 and B3. This conclusion correlates with Beierle's view that public notice mechanisms, in this case the loudhailer, placed in Group C (See FIGURE 1) are useful in increasing public knowledge, and partially increasing transparency and building trust, thereby achieving goals 1 and 2. In all the towns in the study, the pamphlet was considered one of the most cost effective mechanisms for public participation because it had no financial, travel or time implications for them.

Despite the positive aspects of the pamphlet, this mechanism was not perceived as being strong enough to operate alone in the public participation process. The main criticism of

the pamphlet was that compared to two-way communication mechanisms it does not really empower the citizens. This assessment was arrived at based on the fact that in most of the towns this one- way communication did not encourage substantive quality (Goal 3) as illustrated in Tables 11, 12 and 15. The majority of participants did not feel that pamphlets provided opportunities to contribute their knowledge. They also felt that there was no provision to have their suggestions factored into the decision-making process and that they had no real influence on the decisions made; thus, the pamphlet was perceived as more of an informative mechanism than anything else. There was no room for discussion between relevant stakeholders and this was seen as the reason why according to the citizens, the pamphlet failed to reduce conflict in all the towns (Goal 6).

Another challenge was that this mechanism was perceived as being exclusive of illiterate citizens. Pamphlets require effective literacy and are therefore not likely to appeal to communities with depressed levels of literacy as seen in both the municipalities under scrutiny in this study (refer to site description in Chapter 4). Further, this mechanism was viewed as not being an enabler of face to face interaction with the leaders, something that these communities preferred, especially the elderly members.

ICT TOOL/ SYSTEM

Regardless of the fact that the ICT was perceived in all the towns covered by this study as being cost- effective (Goal 5) and as a mechanism that assists with educating and informing (Goal 1), it was not the most preferred mechanism (Tables 10-14 and the quotes in the findings). Lack of trust in the ICT system to bring change and pre-existing mistrust in governments ability played a major role in affecting whether citizens used the method or not.

In tandem with the findings in the study by Bagau et al (2011), this study's participants preferred using traditional mechanisms simply because they valued face to face personal contact with municipal leaders. Thus, a major finding of this study is that since the ICT tool did not encourage the communities' cultural norms it became an obstacle to participation by members of the affected communities. The importance of culture is also borne out by

the public service guide for public participation which observes that cultural barriers can deter participation (DPSA, 2014). Nevertheless, the ICT mechanism was found to appeal to the youth who are, however, in the minority. Given these observations and in order to accommodate those inclined towards cultural norms as well as those less-constrained by them, it would be advisable to use this mechanism alongside other pre-existing mechanisms.

Cost – effectiveness as previously mentioned was important to the participants because of the socio- economic challenges facing members of this community such as the challenge of unemployment (Statistics SA, 2016; Statistics South Africa, 2016). The affordability of engagement methods increases accessibility and is likely to encourage participation. Accordingly, the ICT tool promotes the principle of accessibility as stipulated in the National Policy framework for public participation (DPLG, 2007). This is important in promoting good governance as desired by the South African government.

The ICT tool may have been considered one of the most cost-effective mechanisms but when compared to the other mechanisms, it is found that participants from all the towns excepting Town B3 viewed the ICT as one of the least effective in achieving the six intended goals of public participation. It was only considered empowering and efficient in Town B3 because the citizens there attached excitement to learning new methods of reporting faults. The quick response time to the faults they reported also made them feel heard. This corroborates the assertion that while technology may prove useful in public participation, it does not automatically mean increased participation (Bagui et al., 2011; Mukonza, 2013).

Despite the benefits that came with using the ICT tool the majority of respondents did not use the mechanism; in addition it was not viewed as a mechanism that reduced conflict in any of the towns because it was mainly used as a reporting method and not as a platform for more substantial discussions. As presented in the findings (Town A1, A3, B1, and B2) this mechanism was not really perceived as a mechanism that allows for substantive quality (Goal 3) and the decision- making process (See Tables 10, 12, 13 and 14). One of the main criticisms of the ICT by participants was that this mechanism excludes the elderly

who find it difficult to use their phones. Exclusion of the elderly opposes the fundamental principles of public participation which encourage diversity and inclusivity of all as stipulated in the national framework and SA Constitution of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996; DPLG, 2007).

The main reason why the ICT did not, in the estimation of participants, qualify to be the most effective mechanism was not necessarily that there was something problematic with the mechanism. Its failure to qualify had more to do with a number of external factors. The first external factor was the pre-existing distrust of the government that emanated from dissatisfaction with service delivery. Accordingly, it was less likely that participants would feel that this mechanism could bring any change. Their previous experiences had influenced them against trusting this new mechanism. This predisposition against trusting the new ICT mechanism tends to defeat the main purpose of the public participation process which aims at building trust between the government and its citizens as described by Creighton (2005). Another external contributor identified by the citizens was that there were not many water and sanitation faults at the time the ICT system began to be implemented. Lastly, the ward councillors and other community leaders had not done a good job of reminding citizens to use the ICT tool. An ancillary to this observation is that those who had received the notices made no use of them. The problem was compounded by the fact that there were others who had not received the pamphlets concerning the ICT.

LOUDHAILER

In comparison to other mechanisms the loudhailer was also regarded as one of the least-effective mechanisms in promoting the intended goals of public participation. It was perceived as useful only in educating and informing citizens (Goal 1) but was seen as a cost-effective mechanism (Goal) (See table's 10-15). However, as presented in the findings, the majority of respondents did not feel it was a mechanism that was empowering. This was due to its being a one-way communication method that did not provide a space where participants could respond to or engage with the municipality. According to the citizens, this mechanism did not incorporate the public's values and views (Goal 2) nor encourage

substantive quality. Other criticisms were that the leaders using the loudhailer did not always go round to all the areas. The result of this was that not everyone heard the announcements being made. In addition at times the announcements were made at inappropriate times.

NEWSPAPER

The newspaper was only used in Town B3. Based on the findings of this study, it is logical to conclude that the citizens were not confident that the newspaper as a mechanism promotes any of the goals. As shown in Table 15 they were unsure whether this mechanism could achieve any of the set goals. The fact that the newspaper was one of the least-used mechanisms in these municipalities suggests that newspapers are not ideal for rural areas.

5.5 GENERAL DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Despite the differences in opinions presented in the findings, the main themes that emerged from across the towns during the interviews, pertained to the need for access to information, trust, empowerment, being valued, reducing conflict and achieving cost-effectiveness. The mechanisms that projected these themes the most, were deliberative mechanism such as public meetings and focus groups, were considered the most ideal for the public participation process in rural Eastern Cape. Similar to facts pointed out by a number of authors (Abelson et al., 2003; Cutlip, 2012; Sebola, 2017), deliberative methods in this study were also seen to be being empowering because they allow for two way communication in which participants can express their views and have an opportunity to influence decisions. It is evident from these study being empowered is essential to encouraging participation by citizens. If citizen inputs are not considered, the citizens find no value in the engagement process which only perpetuates the current challenges of citizen reluctance.

This also shows the importance of face to face interaction with municipal officials for rural citizens, hence one way mechanisms such as pamphlets and loudhailers did not leave much

of an impression on them despite being useful information channels. What may be considered cost effective for citizens may not necessarily be cost effective for the municipality which means serious consideration needs to be made to the budget allocation for public participation in rural areas.

According to Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein, 2016), these one-way communication channels from government to citizens fall under the three lowest rungs of participation (manipulation, therapy, informing). They do not provide citizens with power to influence the decisions made. Despite being rated low in comparison to other mechanisms on an individual level these mechanisms still seemed important if used in combination with other methods. Some participants felt educated and informed through the pamphlets. Although this is a form of participation, it does not encourage active involvement as stipulated by South African legislation.

We find that no mechanism is perfect and that each mechanism has its strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, it is advised that the municipality uses a combination of participatory mechanisms. It was also noted that the impact of the mechanism can be positively or negatively affected depending on the quality of those facilitating.

In all the towns covered by this study it was evident that the participants appreciated information because the lack of access to information prohibits participation. An example of this is the case of ward committees. As previously discussed by Greenberg and Mathotho (2010), participants were sceptical and distrustful in cases where they were not receiving adequate information. Implementers of public participation need to recognize the need for feedback to citizens regarding issues discussed prior. It assists in building trust hence public meetings and focus groups excelled.

The findings of this study confirm what Creighton (2005) says about public participation as a process that requires sufficient skills and time. The overall findings show that there are still challenges of inadequate human resources and poor administrative skills similar to those pointed out by Koelble and LiPuma (2010). How a mechanism performed was affected by the quality of skills those facilitating. This is something that tends to impact

negatively on the public participation process overall. Therefore, the findings coincide with the findings of Seballo (2017) whose conclusion is that the success of the public participation process is not determined by the communication tool applied, but rather by how effectively the mechanism is used.

CHAPTER 6 MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the findings of the study and provided a discussion of the findings of the study. Whilst Chapter six specifies the study's main conclusions and recommendations, based on the findings and discussions from Chapter Five.

This study assessed participatory mechanisms in the water and sanitation sector in rural areas using two municipalities in the Eastern Cape as a case study and answered the following main question:

What are the South African rural public's perceptions on whether the participatory mechanisms used in the water and sanitation sector achieve the intended goals of public participation?

The overall aim of the study was to identify which mechanisms rural citizens preferred and viewed as being the most effective in achieving the intended goals of public participation in the water and sanitation sector.

In order to answer this question the researcher answered the following two- sub questions

1. What participatory mechanisms within the legal frameworks for public participation in South Africa, have rural citizens engaged in?
2. What are the perceptions of rural South African citizens on participatory mechanisms?

6.2 WHAT PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS WITHIN THE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION HAVE RURAL CITIZENS ENGAGED IN?

Evidence from the six towns in the study shows that local municipalities are to a high degree meeting the requirements of public participation by ensuring the implementation of

the various participatory mechanisms designed to foster and enhance public participation as stipulated in the Constitution Act of 1996, the Public Participation Framework of 2007 and the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000. However, a ward committee was absent in one of the towns showing the need for further supervision and accountability of local municipalities to ensure the implementation and functioning of well-skilled ward committees. This is a cause for concern, considering that the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 and the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 requires the use of a ward committee. This is especially so, given that ward committees are pivotal to the public participation process, their role being to mediate between citizens and the municipality.

There was unequal exposure to various mechanisms among participants from each town. In Municipality 'A' participants from Town 'A1' had only experienced three of the mechanisms, namely the loudhailer, focus groups and the ICT system. By contrast, participants from Town 'A2' and 'A3' were familiar with more mechanisms as follows: the loudhailer, public meetings/hearings, ward committees, focus groups and the ICT system. In Municipality 'B' all the participants from Town 'B1', 'B2' and 'B3' had been exposed to pamphlets, the loudhailer, public meetings, ward committees, focus groups and the ICT system. However, only participants from Town 'B3' had knowledge of the existence of newspapers. Newspapers were not considered the most ideal participatory mechanism due to high literacy levels and issues of accessibility due to infrastructural challenges such as roads and no postal service that reaches rural areas. None of the participants had participated in telephone interviews or surveys. The implication here is that these two mechanisms are not ideal for engagement of rural citizens

6.3 WHAT ARE THE PERCEPTIONS OF RURAL SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENS ON PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS?

In each of the six towns in the study, there were differences with regard to what was expected of the participatory mechanisms and on the extent to which each mechanism promoted the intended goals of public participation. These differences also occurred

between the towns depending on their background and experiences. The differences of opinion on individual participatory mechanisms are an indication that what might work in one community may not necessarily do so in another community. It is, therefore, essential to understand each particular community before deciding which methods to use as demonstrated by experiences elsewhere (Queensland, 2011). This is crucial, given that communities are not homogenous and that each town has its own character, cultural norms, and each mechanism portrays different outcomes. It is, therefore, ideal for each Municipality to decide what is most suitable for their community. This is catered for in the relevant laws as shown in the public commission report (2008). This can successfully be used to address any contingencies that might arise and prevent them from stalling progress.

The 1998 Beierle framework of social goals was a useful guide in formulating questions aimed at obtaining the citizens' views. This framework also proved useful in determining the extent to which each mechanism was perceived as being capable of achieving the six goals suggested by Beierle (1998). Each mechanism was perceived as being useful in attaining some of the goals and at times, excepting the ward committees, by all the towns in Municipality B. This was still the case, despite the fact that the ward committee was recognized as a pivotal player in legislation, in this study the majority of respondents, with the exception of those from Town A2 and A3, felt that the ward councillors were not performing their duties efficiently. In Town A1 most respondents professed little knowledge of the ward committee and appeared not to know who the ward committee was. Thus, the ward committee was generally viewed as not being committed to its duties. In the view of the citizens, its members were so inconspicuous as to be almost absent, thereby engendering the feeling that they were not addressing the needs of the citizens. Neither did the majority see the ward committee as an empowering mechanism.

In this study, as in that of Beierle (1998), and where the increase of trust was concerned, the mechanisms that promoted two-way communication performed better than those that promoted one-way communication. In both studies, two-way communication mechanisms are recognized as having the potential to increase the level of interaction between opposing

sides thereby increasing the chances of citizens influencing the decision-making process. This explains why public meetings and focus groups were the most preferred and the most effective mechanism in achieving the desired goals of public participation. According to the participants, these two deliberative methods build trust and provide participants with an opportunity to have a voice, to be empowered and to be able to share their views and preferences and also contribute to the designing and/or identifying of solutions to problems.

The citizens also felt that these mechanisms, although not perfect, provided space to discuss their differences thereby reducing conflict. These two mechanisms were valued by the majority of respondents for their ability to provide an opportunity to obtain feedback on previous agreed interventions or projects and concerns. It is clear that when citizens are accorded the opportunity to express their views, discuss conflicting perceptions, formulate solutions, receive feedback, and be informed, their sense of partnership as well as their involvement in decision-making decreases the possibility of apathy against the decisions made. Conversely, one – way communication mechanisms such as loudhailers, pamphlets and newspapers were not perceived as being the most effective in attaining the goals. This was mainly because there was no provision for the participants to have a say in the public participation process. Nevertheless, there does seem to be an all-round appreciation that participants in the decision-making process are one of the most cost effective mechanisms for educating and informing the general public. The participants valued being informed and made aware of what was going on.

The fact that no single mechanism was perceived as being capable of attaining all the goals in every town indicates that no single mechanism can be successfully-used across all rural communities. Although it is possible to identify the mechanisms that are the most likely to encourage participation, each mechanism has its strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, based on the participants' perspectives, it is ideal to use a combination of various mechanisms together. This would ensure that everyone is accommodated, the illiterate, the elderly, and those busy working during the day as well as the younger generation who use modern technology such the ICT tool.

It was evident that trust and empowerment were of crucial importance to all participants and the mechanisms that were perceived as promoting trust and empowerment performed better in achieving the other set goals than those that did not. The absence of trust leads to reluctance to use the mechanisms such as in the case of the ICT tool in most of the towns. Trust is an important element of public participation considering that one of its main purposes is to build trust between the citizens and Government in order to improve service delivery as stipulated in the Public Participation Framework 2007 or Constitution of South Africa 108 of 1998. To a certain extent each mechanism managed to promote trust in different towns. However, a comparison of the use of mechanisms across all six towns reveals that focus groups and public meetings were considered most effective in building trust between citizens and municipality. Keeping informed was important to the participants, however it needs to be substantial, reliable and useful. This not only empowers them but it also helped them to better prepare for meetings or water cuts, and to certain extent helps to build trust in the ability to the municipality.

The two municipalities in which the processes of public participation in decision-making were seen to be aligned to policy legislation ensured that participatory mechanisms were in place, although there did not seem to be any guarantee that the municipalities would use the citizens' input in their decisions. There were indications that although public participation is important, it was not always easy to implement. Indications are that measures to ensure the placement of the right mechanisms for each town and to satisfy the needs for skilled knowledgeable staff /leaders as a way of fine-tuning the functioning of the mechanisms must be instituted. This study found that the performance of the six participatory mechanisms was influenced by the quality of leaders and the capacity of Government. This development tends to compound the burdens that the municipalities have to face, given that they do not always have the capacity to ensure effective engagement to satisfy the citizen's expectations

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations in this section are being highlighted. Firstly, when engaging with the public - whether as a researcher or the municipality- it is important to first identify the factors that matter to each community and to tailor the participatory mechanisms to the needs of each specific community. This ensures that there is effective public participation. Communities must not be treated as if they are homogenous entities since what may be appreciated in one community may not be ideal for another community.

Secondly, the study shows that no mechanism can stand on its own. Accordingly, it would be more effective to use a combination of mechanisms. This calls for increased resources such as time, finances and skilled, dedicated leaders/staff knowledgeable in public participation values.

Thirdly, based on the findings of this study, it is apparent that mechanisms that are cognisant of cultural norms, literacy levels and values of the community and that also make the participants feel respected have a higher chance of increasing engagement. This is one way of explaining the reason why, despite recognizing the potential that the ICT system has to improve participation, the citizen's preferred traditional methods that supported their value for direct face to face interaction, based on trust and accountability. Mechanisms such as the ICT system and pamphlets excluded the elderly and illiterate in the population, and thereby unwittingly strengthened the preference for the traditional two-way communication model. This is antagonistic to the principles and purposes of Public participation as stipulated in SA policy (DPLG 2007).

Fourthly, this study reveals that though public participation is ideal, it is a challenging process. Therefore, the municipality needs to offer a support system for municipal leaders to address challenges such as disputes/ conflict with community members, and by so doing ensure that there is efficient use of available communication channels. The support system must also provide feedback and an adequate recording system of water and sanitation problems.

Fifthly, the inconsistency in the performance of ward committees per municipality indicates the need for capacity building workshops. Capacity building workshops must be created within municipalities in order to enable ward councillors and the ward committee members to better coordinate sanitation and water issues with the local community members. These include workshops on how to build health relationships within themselves as leaders and with locals and increased accountability measures of ward committee to municipality office.

The fact that focus groups had been administered by outsiders may have been one of the main reasons they were the most efficient. The locals trusted the researcher and believed in their reliability more than the municipal leaders. This suggests that it may be more advised to use members from other towns to conduct focus groups within the communities. In addition, providing feedback was found to be a key contributing factor to trust building with researcher. This is a factor the municipality needs to improve on.

Trust was a major influencing factor in determining the extent to which each mechanism achieved the six public participation goals recommended by Beierle (1998). Therefore, the municipality needs to actively create new avenues to regain the trust of the local communities.

Lastly, since this study has established through fieldwork why the government has been unsuccessful in soliciting public participation as stipulated in the SA policy, it is recommended that its findings be made available to the relevant government departments. Through this study, the voiceless communities have made their lack of participation as the main cause of government's failure in the past. This study has also shown the need for government departments to consult university dissertations in relevant areas as they make policies. Therefore, it is highly recommended that this work be made available to all relevant SA government policy makers. SA university dissertations should be a source of information for all government policy makers. In so doing, it will demonstrate the practical need for research at Masters and doctoral levels of study at all SA universities.

6.5 FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The issue of trust was raised several times in this study. Trust is therefore major challenge that the citizens are facing in their interaction with local municipalities in South Africa. The judgment of the participants is based on past disappointments. There is a need to investigate the mechanisms and come up with practical ways of building trust between the municipality and its citizens as well as how to address current obstacles. It was also evident that areas where trust had been built, the citizens were more willing to participate. Therefore, more studies in South Africa should assess the correlation between trust in the Municipality and the willingness of citizens to participate.

Further research must also be done to investigate whether combining the mechanisms promotes more effective public participation. It may be recommendable to also explore which mechanisms appeal to which gender and age group, so as to ensure that the right mechanisms are tailored to become all- inclusive for the citizens.

Lastly, there is a need for more investigation into how to ensure a standardized measure for each mechanism to ensure the same quality of public participation in all communities

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ANNEXURE A: CONSENT FORM

ASSESSING PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS IN THE WATER AND SANITATION SECTOR IN THE EASTERN CAPE

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

Introduction

This research investigates citizens perceptions of various participatory mechanisms used in the water and sanitation. The aim of the study is to identity which mechanisms citizens perceive as ideal for rural areas so as to improve the participation process.

The interview process will take 1 hour of your time

By signing this form, you are agreeing to the following:

1. I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Runyararo Chibota from the University of Cape Town. I understand that the project is designed to gather Information about My perceptions of participatory mechanisms in the water and sanitation sector in Ndlambe and Kou- Kamma Local Municipality
2. My participation is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation.
3. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
4. Participation involves being interviewed and notes will be taken during the interview.
5. My response to the questions may be identifiable but will be confidential and used for the purposes of this research only.

Appendices

6. I have read and understood the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions Answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

7. I understand that this research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Cape Town Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee.

Who to Contact

If you have any questions about the study or about your rights and treatment as research

If you have any questions about the study or about your rights and treatment as research subjects, feel free to contact at any time:

Ms Runyararo Chibota

Department of Information Systems

University of Cape Town

072 368 9793

Prof Ulrike Rivett

Department of Information Systems

University of Cape Town

021 650 5280

Certificate of Consent for Interview Participants

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have asked, have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study .

My Signature Date

ANNEXURE B: SEMI- STRUCTURED INTERVIEW (LIKERT SCALE) PHASE 1

1. Do you know what public participation is and do you know who your public participation officer is?

2. Which methods of public participation have you engaged with? Select below:

- a) Focus groups
- b) Public comment (filling in questionnaire or telephone interview, survey)
- c) Public hearing /public meeting
- d) Public education/ notices (Posters , pamphlets, news media)
- e) Advisory groups (neighbourhood council /sub-committees/committee councils)

3. Out of these methods which do you feel are the two best, which are the two worst and why?

Two best:

Explain why you prefer these two: -----

Two worst:

Explain why you do not like these approaches:

.....
.....

4. Which of these methods were used to communicate with you about the need for participants for the WRC research project?

5. Have you ever been a part of a focus group? Yes/No

6. What is your view about focus groups?

(Based on your experience of focus groups, including the one conducted through research, did it do the following?)

6. Do focus groups do the following:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) Inform and help you understand the current problems surrounding water and sanitation delivery and what the project is about?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) Educate you on your rights and policies pertaining to water, sanitation and public participation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) Help you to know what the WRC project is about (or any other water and sanitation projects) or actions being	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<p>taken to address the water and sanitation problems?</p>					
<p>d) Include all stakeholder stakeholders in the decision-making process of water and sanitation delivery?</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>e) Give you a chance to state your view/ preferences or contribute knowledge on projects?</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>f) Make you feel included in decisions made?</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>g) Aid in building trust with the municipality or experts running projects?</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>h) Reduce conflict among community members or between community and municipality?</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>i) Save time and money compared to the other members? (I.e. do you agree that these meetings do not take a lot of time or do you disagree?).</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Have you attended a public hearing/meeting? If not, explain why not, if you can. If yes what is your perception of public meetings

8.. Do public meetings/public meeting do the following: (Also make reference to the public meetings held during running of project)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) Inform and help you understand the current problems surrounding water and sanitation delivery?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) Educate you on your rights and policies pertaining to water, sanitation and public participation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) Help you to know what projects or actions are being taken to address the water and sanitation problems?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

d) Include all stakeholders in the decision-making process of water and sanitation delivery?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) Give you a chance to state your view/ preferences or contribute knowledge?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f) Include all stakeholders in the decision-making process of water and sanitation delivery?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g) Aid in building trust with the municipality or experts running projects?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h) Reduce conflict among community members or between community and municipality?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i) Save time and money compared to the other methods?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Have you ever filled in a questionnaire, survey, or had a telephone interview? (Public comment) if yes do you consider them effective in the public participation process expand

10. Do questionnaires, survey or telephone interviews do the following:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) Inform and help you understand the current problems surrounding water and sanitation delivery?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) Educate you on your rights and policies pertaining to water, sanitation and public participation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) Help you to know what projects or actions are being taken to address the water and sanitation problems?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) Include all stakeholders in the decision-making process of water and sanitation delivery?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) Give you a chance to state your view/ preferences or contribute knowledge on projects?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f) Make you feel included in decisions made?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g) Aid in building trust with the municipality or experts running	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

projects?					
h) Reduce conflict among community members or between community and municipality?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i) Save time and money compared to the other methods?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Have you ever received information via notices, pamphlets or news, radio announcements? Did you find it useful?

12.. Do you feel that notices, pamphlets , news and radio announcements do the following:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) Inform and help you understand the current problems surrounding water and sanitation delivery?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) Educate you on your rights and policies pertaining to water, sanitation and public	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

participation?	
c) Help you to know what projects or actions are being taken to address the water and sanitation problems?	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
d) Include all stakeholders in the decision-making process of water and sanitation delivery?	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
e) Give you a chance to state your view/preferences or contribute knowledge on projects?	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
f) Make you feel included in decisions made?	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
g) Aid in building trust with the municipality or experts running projects?	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
h) Reduce conflict among community members or between community and municipality?	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
i) Save time and money compared to the other methods?	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>

13. How useful are pamphlets useful to you in the process?

14. Do you know any advisory groups e.g. committee councils? If yes how do you perceive them?

15. How is your relationship with your ward committee or ward councillor?

16. Do advisory groups e.g. (Ward committee council) do the following:	Strongly	Agree	Not sure	Disagre e	Strongl y Disagre e
a) Inform and help you understand the current problems surrounding water and sanitation delivery?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) Educate you on your rights and policies pertaining to water, sanitation and public participation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) Help you to know what projects or actions are being taken to address the water and sanitation problems?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

d) Include all stakeholders in the decision-- making process of water and sanitation delivery?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) Give you a chance to state your views/perceptions or contribute knowledge on projects?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f) Make you feel included in the project or decisions made?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g) Aid in building trust with the municipality or experts running projects?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h) Reduce conflict among community members or between community and municipality?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i) Save time and money compared to the other methods?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ANNEXURE C: SEMI – STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS FOR PHASE 2 (ICT)

Town:

Interviewer:

Number of participants:

Community questions

General questions

1. How many of you heard about the project through the pamphlets? If you heard via other methods please specify?
2. How many of you called toll – free line and how many of you send an sms text?
3. Which methods did you prefer this one or walking in to office?

Goal 1 –Informed and educate

4. Did you feel informed and had a clear understanding of how you should use the new reporting system?
5. Did the call or feedback text help you understand better what is being done about your water or sanitation problem?

-
6. Did you learn anything from using the mobile and toll free line or about the municipality? (ie How to send a please call for the first time or who to speak to you)

Goal 2

- 7 .Do you feel the app/new reporting system introduced took into consideration your previous concerns?
8. Do you feel it included all stakeholders in the decision making process of water and sanitation delivery (Ward Committee, woman, men , young ,Old)
9. Did you perceive this mechanisms as user friendly mechanism and that everyone could use the phones if so why and if not why?

Goal 3

10. Did using the app reporting system or toll free line give you a chance to say your view, preferences or contribute knowledge on projects?
11. Did it help you communicate better with municipality and share your challenges? If so how and if not why?
12. Did you feel you now had a role to play in the decision making of what happens to your water problems? expand

Goal 4

13. Did getting and SMS text feedback help you build trust that your problem is being dealt with? if so why if not why ?

14. To what extent did speaking to someone on the toll free line help them build trust with Municipality or research team? If not explain , if so explain

15. In your opinion has mutual respect & trust has improved between the municipality and citizens since the introduction of the system?

Goal 5

16. Does this method reduce conflict between members and municipality (e.g. does it provide a space where differences on water and sanitation delivery issues are resolved?

17. Where you getting your problems attended to how many did / how many did not?

Goal 6

17 Did using the toll free line or text saves time and money compared to the other methods such as walking in? either answer expand

Overall questions about System

18. Are the limitations of the municipality discussed openly?

19. Have citizens been accepting/supportive of the system?

ANNXURE D: TABLE PRESENTING WHICH QUESTIONS ARE LINKED TO WHICH MECHANISMS

Mechanisms	Goals	Questions	Data Collection Phase 1 (DCP1)/Tool
Focus group	1	6a-6c	DCP1/ semi-structured interviews
	2	6d-6e	
	3	6f	
	4	6g	
	5	6h	
	6	6i	
Public Meeting/hearing	1	8a-c	DCP1/ semi-structured interviews
	2	8d-E	
	3	8f	
	4	8g	
	5	8h	
	6	8i	
Questionnaires/Survey/ Telephone Interview	1	10a-c	DCP1/ semi-structured interviews
	2	10d-e	

	3	10f	
	4	10g	
	5	10h	
	6	10i	
Loud hailer	1	12a-c	DCP1/ semi-structured interviews
	2	12d-e	
	3	12f	
	4	12g	
	5	12h	
	6	12i	
pamphlets	1	14a-c	DCP1/ semi-structured interviews w
	2	14d-e	
	3	14f	
	4	14g	
	5	14h	
	6	14i	
News media (newspaper/radio)	1	16a-c	DCP1/ semi-structured interviews
	2	16d-e	

	3	16f	
	4	16g	
	5	16 h	
	6	16i	
Ward	1	18 a-c	DCP2/Q2 Semi – structured interview Focus groups
	2	18 d-e	
	3	18f	
	4	18g	
	5	18h	
	6	18i	

Table 16 Questions for phase 2 linked to goals

Mechanism	Goal	Question	Data collection phase 2(DCP2)/tool
ICT	1	Q4-Q6	DCP2/Q2 Semi – structured interview Focus groups
	2	Q7-Q9	
	3	Q10-Q12	
	4	Q13-Q15	
	5	Q16-17	
	6	Q4-Q6	

ANNEXURE E: ETHICS

This section has been removed to protect the authority's signatures online.

ANNEXURE F

INTRODUCTION TO ICT SYSTEM/TOOL AS A PARTICIPATORY MECHANISM

This ICT system was designed to encourage participation through providing an alternative means of reporting faults and obtaining feedback. For the in-depth background of the design of the system and process of the design refer to the WRC KRC5/2214 report (Rivett, et al., 2015). The ICT system was designed through co- design approach.

Once the ICT system design had been agreed upon and presented before the necessary involved stakeholders the community members and municipality officials were oriented with the functionality of the system between the months of 27th of October and 30th of October 2014. Community members were informed through the use public meetings held at the town halls located in each of the towns and through pamphlets refer to **appendix (D)** which were distributed in public places, homes, post office, library and municipal offices. The system worked for over a period of 8 months.

How the system operated

Since it has been established that most people in the community had access to mobile phones it was agreed that this tool would be the main means to reach the municipality. Citizens either sent a Please- Call – me (PCM), call the toll free line or walk in to local municipal office to register their complaint. The local officer would then call back the client who would have sent the text. This means of reporting faults did not incur any costs to citizens which had been a previous issue in both Municipalities.

The local officer was responsible for receiving and recording the complaint and also to obtain contact details, of participants including location of problem. This would be captured in the data base. The technical team would then log into the database system on a daily basis in order to view the problems lodged. The team would then agree on when each problem will be addressed and would send a unique reference number to the citizens by sms. The technical team would fix the problem and update the data base. If the problem

was still not fixed within seven working days, the local office would examine the cause of delay and inform the client. The client could also call back using their reference number and follow up on problem.